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No. 05-566

IN THE

Supreme Court of the United States

MARTHA HOLTON DIMICK, CHAIRPERSON, MINNESOTA BOARD ON JUDICIAL STANDARDS, *et al.*,
Petitioners,

v.

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, *et al.*,
Respondents.

On Petition for a Writ of Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

MIKE HATCH
Attorney General
State of Minnesota

KRISTINE L. EIDEN
Deputy Attorney General

THOMAS C. VASALY
Assistant Attorney General

445 Minnesota Street,
Suite 1100
St. Paul, MN 55101-2128
(651) 296-6752

THOMAS R. PHILLIPS
Counsel of Record
BAKER BOTTS L.L.P.
1500 San Jacinto Center
98 San Jacinto Boulevard
Austin, TX 78701-4039
(512) 322-2500

JEFFREY A. LAMKEN
MICHAEL G. PATTILLO, JR.
JACOB A. SOMMER
BAKER BOTTS L.L.P.
1299 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20004-2400
(202) 639-7700

Counsel for Petitioners

WILSON-EPES PRINTING CO., INC. – (202) 789-0096 – WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

Minnesota selects its judges through a system of nonpartisan elections. Canon 5 of the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct, promulgated by the Minnesota Supreme Court, regulates the campaign finance and political activities of judges and candidates for election to judicial office. Canon 5 prohibits judges and judicial candidates from "personally solicit[ing] or accept[ing] campaign contributions." Instead, judges and judicial candidates must establish committees to handle all campaign finance matters, including the solicitation of contributions. Canon 5 also prohibits judges and judicial candidates from identifying themselves as members of, from seeking or accepting the endorsement of, and from attending and speaking at gatherings of, partisan political organizations. The questions presented are:

1. Whether Minnesota's rule precluding judges and judicial candidates from personally soliciting campaign contributions is inconsistent with the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or otherwise invalid insofar as it bars them from (1) signing letters requesting campaign contributions; and (2) making personal appeals for campaign contributions to "large groups" of individuals.

2. Whether Minnesota's restrictions on the partisan political activities of judges and judicial candidates violate the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or are otherwise invalid to the extent that they bar judges and judicial candidates from (1) attending and speaking at political party gatherings; (2) identifying themselves as members of a political party; and (3) seeking, accepting, or using political party endorsements.

PARTIES TO THE PROCEEDINGS BELOW

Petitioner Martha Holton Dimick, in her capacity as Chairperson of the Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards, is the successor to Suzanne White, who was defendant-appellee in the court of appeals and previously respondent in this Court. Ms. White was successor to Verna Kelly, who was also defendant-appellee in the court of appeals. Petitioner Kenneth L. Jorgensen, in his capacity as Director of the Minnesota Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility, was defendant-appellee in the court of appeals. Mr. Jorgensen succeeded Edward C. Cleary, who was defendant-appellee in the court of appeals and previously respondent in this Court. Kent A. Gernander, in his capacity as Chair of the Minnesota Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board, is the successor to Charles E. Lundberg, who was defendant-appellee in the court of appeals and previously respondent in this Court.

Respondents Republican Party of Minnesota, Indian Asian American Republicans of Minnesota, Republican Seniors, Young Republican League of Minnesota, Minnesota College Republicans, Gregory F. Wersal, Cheryl L. Wersal, Mark E. Wersal, Corwin C. Hulbert, Campaign for Justice, Minnesota African American Republican Council, Muslim Republicans, Michael Maxim, and Kevin J. Kolosky, were plaintiffs-appellants in the court of appeals.

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PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

Martha Holton Dimick, Chairperson of the Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards, Kent A. Gernander, Chair of the Minnesota Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board, and Kenneth L. Jorgensen, Director of the Minnesota Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility, petition for a writ of certiorari to review the judgment of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit in this case.

OPINIONS BELOW

The *en banc* opinion of the court of appeals (App., *infra*, 1a-86a) is reported at 416 F.3d 738 (8th Cir. 2005). The panel opinion (App., *infra*, 88a-122a) is reported at 361 F.3d 1035 (2004). This Court's earlier decision (App., *infra*, 123a-180a) is reported at 536 U.S. 765 (2002). The court of appeals' first decision (App., *infra*, 183a-272a) is reported at 247 F.3d 854 (2001). The district court's opinion (App., *infra*, 273a-307a) is reported at 63 F. Supp. 2d 967 (1999).

JURISDICTION

The court of appeals sitting *en banc* entered its judgment on August 2, 2005. The jurisdiction of this Court is invoked under 28 U.S.C. § 1254(1).

CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY PROVISIONS INVOLVED

Relevant provisions of the United States Constitution and Minnesota's Code of Judicial Conduct are set forth in the Appendix at App., *infra*, 323a-327a.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

I. Background

For more than 150 years, most States have selected some or all of their judges by popular election. For a brief period early in this Nation's history, most state judges were appointed by the governor or the legislature. L. Berkson, *Judicial Selection in the United States*, in *Guide to Political Campaigns in America* 398-399 & n.1 (P. Herrnson, ed.

2005); C. Nelson, *A Re-Evaluation of Scholarly Explanations for the Rise of the Elective Judiciary in Antebellum America*, 37 Am. J. Legal Hist. 190, 190 (1993). But the public rapidly came to believe that "governors and legislatures had distributed judgeships on the basis of 'service to the party' rather than on the 'legal skills or judicial temperament' of appointees," and reformers concluded that popular election provided the best opportunity to secure judges who served the law, rather than a patron. K. Hall, *The Judiciary on Trial: State Constitutional Reform and the Rise of an Elected Judiciary, 1846-1860*, 45 Historian 337, 347 (1983); Nelson, *supra*, at 194. At state constitutional conventions, "[d]elegate after delegate argued that the appointive system left far more room for the play of partisan politics than the elective system." K. Hall, *Progressive Reform and the Decline of Democratic Accountability: Popular Election of State Supreme Court Justices, 1850-1920*, 1984 Am. Bar Found. Research J. 345, 346-47. As a result, by the eve of the Civil War, most States had embraced popular elections as the best means of selecting their judges. Nelson, *supra*, at 190.

Concerns about political influence—and the corresponding need to preserve both the fact and appearance of an impartial judiciary—resurfaced again by the 1870s. Even in States with elected judiciaries, the public became concerned that "judges were almost invariably selected by political machines and controlled by them." Berkson, *supra*, at 398. Since then, States have implemented reforms to combat those problems. Chief among them is the adoption of nonpartisan elections for judicial positions, often coupled with regulation of judicial candidates' partisan activities. *Ibid.* In addition, to redress the potentially corrupting influence of money, many States have barred judicial candidates from personally soliciting campaign contributions. See p. 13-14 n.5, *infra*. This case concerns Minnesota's efforts to protect the impartiality of, and ensure public faith in, its elected judiciary through such measures.

II. Proceedings In This Case

Minnesota has provided for the election of judges since it joined the Union in 1858. Minn. Const. art. VI, § 7. In 1912, the Minnesota legislature joined other States in "decree-[ing] that elections for judicial office be nonpartisan." *Peterson* v. *Stafford*, 490 N.W.2d 418, 422 (Minn. 1992). Like the highest courts of other States, Minnesota's Supreme Court has adopted a Code of Judicial Conduct (based on the ABA's Model Code) that seeks to redress the impact of partisan politics and campaign contributions on judicial impartiality. App., *infra*, 275a-276a.

A. The Lawsuit

Respondent Gregory Wersal—twice an unsuccessful candidate for the Minnesota Supreme Court—filed this suit in 1998 challenging three provisions of Minnesota's Code of Judicial Conduct.[1] Two of those provisions remain at issue.

The "solicitation clause," bars judicial candidates from personally soliciting campaign contributions from potential donors. It provides in relevant part:

> A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions or personally solicit publicly stated support. A candidate may, however, establish committees to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept cam-

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[1] Wersal was joined by members of his family, his campaign committee, the Minnesota Republican Party, and the other respondents. Petitioners are the Chairs of the Minnesota Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board and the Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards, as well as the Director of the Minnesota Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility. By statute and rule, the Minnesota Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board and the Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards are responsible for enforcing Minnesota's Code on Judicial Conduct against lawyers and sitting judges, respectively. See 52 Minn. Stat. Ann., Rules on Lawyers Prof'l Responsibility, Rule 4; 52 Minn. Stat. Ann., Board on Jud. Standards, Rule 2; Minn. Stat. Ann. §§ 490.15, 490.16 & 490.18 (West 2002).

> paign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. * * * Such committees shall not disclose to the candidate the identity of campaign contributors nor shall the committee disclose to the candidate the identity of those who were solicited for contribution or stated public support and refused such solicitation.

52 Minn. Stat., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5B(2) (West 2005). Respondents challenged that clause to the extent it prohibited judicial candidates from personally soliciting contributions from "large" groups or from signing letters seeking contributions. App., *infra*, 235a.

Respondents also challenged the "partisan activities" provisions, which state that "judge[s]" and "candidate[s] for election to judicial office shall not":

> (a) * * * identify themselves as members of a political organization, except as necessary to vote in an election. * * *
>
> (d) attend political gatherings; or seek, accept or use endorsements from a political organization.

52 Minn. Stat., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5A(1). The partisan activities restrictions further declare that candidates' campaign "committees * * * shall not seek, accept or use political organization endorsements." *Id.*, Canon B(2). Respondents challenged those restrictions insofar as they bar judicial candidates from attending or speaking at political party gatherings, identifying themselves as members of political parties, or seeking, accepting, or using political party endorsements.

Respondents further challenged a third provision, the so-called "announce clause" of the Code of Judicial Conduct, which, as explained below, has been invalidated by this Court, was repealed by the Minnesota Supreme Court, and is no longer at issue in this case.

B. The Initial District Court And Court Of Appeals Decisions And This Court's Decision In *White*

The district court upheld all three clauses, App., *infra*, 306a-307a, and the Eighth Circuit affirmed, *id.* at 239a. This Court granted respondents' petition for a writ of certiorari, but limited its review to the announce clause. App., *infra*, 181a; *Republican Party* v. *Kelly*, 534 U.S. 1054 (2001). The Court then reversed. App., *infra*, 144a; *Republican Party* v. *White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002).

The Court began by noting the announce clause's extremely broad scope. That clause, as the Court described it, prohibited "a judicial candidate from stating his views on any specific nonfanciful legal question within the province of the court for which he is running." App., *infra*, 129a. Candidates were even barred from criticizing precedents if the candidate also stated that he or she was not required to follow them. *Id.* at 129a-130a. That broad clause, the Court held, did not survive strict scrutiny. *Id.* at 140a.

The Court then addressed whether that clause "serves the State's interest in maintaining both the appearance of * * * impartiality and its actuality." App., *infra*, 132a-133a n.7. But the Court distinguished among three different aspects of impartiality—(a) avoiding bias or the appearance of bias against particular *parties*; (b) avoiding preconceived notions about *the law*; and (c) ensuring *open-mindedness* on *legal issues*. *Id.* at 131a-140a. The Court agreed that avoiding bias for or against particular *parties* was essential to due process. *Id.* at 131a-132a. But it held that the announce clause was not narrowly tailored to serve that purpose. By its terms, the clause regulated speech on *legal issues*; it did not purport to regulate associational activities that might raise concerns about attitudes toward particular *parties*. *Id.* at 132a. Turning to whether States have a compelling interest in preventing judicial candidates from having preconceived notions about the law, the Court held that States do not. Anyone qualified to be a judge, the Court stated, would necessarily have *some* preconceptions

about legal issues. *Id.* at 133a-134a. Finally, the Court dismissed Minnesota's interest in ensuring that judges remain open-minded. The Court concluded that regulation of campaign speech alone was so underinclusive that preserving open-mindedness could not have been the announce clause's actual purpose. *Id.* at 134a-141a.

Justices Ginsberg, Stevens, Souter, and Breyer dissented. The dissenters observed that, because judges "perform a function fundamentally different from that of the people's elected representatives," there should be a distinction between "elections for political office, in which the First Amendment holds sway, [and] elections designed to select those whose office it is to administer justice," where it does not. App., *infra*, 161a, 163a (Ginsburg, J., dissenting). Judges' First Amendment rights, the dissenters observed, are not the only constitutional concern at stake: "[The] judicial obligation to avoid prejudgment corresponds to the litigant's right * * * to 'an impartial and disinterested tribunal * * * .'" *Id.* at 171a (quoting *Marshall* v. *Jerrico, Inc.*, 446 U.S. 238, 242 (1980)).

C. The Decisions Below

On remand, a panel of the Eighth Circuit initially upheld the solicitation clause and remanded the partisan-activities regulations. App., *infra*, 88a-122a.[2] The Eighth Circuit granted rehearing *en banc*. *Id.* at 87a. Applying strict scrutiny, the Eighth Circuit then struck down the challenged portions of the partisan-activities prohibition and the solicitation clause. *Id.* at 1a-86a.

1. At the outset, the Eighth Circuit rejected Minnesota's interest in preserving judicial "independence" from political influences. App., *infra*, 18a n.7. The Eighth Circuit

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[2] The remand required the district court to take evidence concerning the need for the partisan-activities clause, the justification for the distinction between political parties and other organizations, and whether banning certain partisan activities by candidates solely during elections "is arbitrary." App., *infra*, 107a.

acknowledged the State's interest in preserving public confidence in its judiciary by insulating judges and judicial candidates from partisan entanglement. Insofar as that represented an effort to maintain separation of powers—*i.e.*, a government with a political executive and legislature but a non-political judiciary—the Eighth Circuit held the interest insufficiently compelling. *Ibid.* No court, the Eighth Circuit declared, has ever determined that a State's "interest in maintaining separation of powers is sufficiently compelling to abridge core First Amendment freedoms." *Ibid.*

The Eighth Circuit then accused the Minnesota Supreme Court of "compromis[ing] any separation of powers framework [in] Minnesota's constitution." App., *infra*, 20a n.7. Minnesota's highest court, the Eighth Circuit asserted, had acted "without apparent constitutional or statutory authority" in creating Canon 5, invading the authority "to regulate the political climate of statewide elections * * * seemingly granted only to the Minnesota legislature * * *." *Ibid.*

2. The Eighth Circuit then turned to the State's interest in "impartiality." The court of appeals acknowledged that States have a compelling interest in guaranteeing that judges are not biased for or against a *particular party* to a proceeding. App., *infra*, 22a. The court of appeals also acknowledged that States may have an interest in ensuring that judges remain open-minded on legal issues, and do not by their campaign statements become incapable of considering issues anew in the specific cases before them. *Id.* at 31a-32a. But the court of appeals struck down the challenged portions of the partisan-activities prohibition and solicitation clause nonetheless.

a. With respect to the partisan-activities prohibition, the Eighth Circuit asserted that it is directed toward associational activities that are "part-and-parcel of a candidate's speech for or against particular *issues* embraced by the political party." App., *infra*, 25a. The court of appeals therefore held that the partisan-activities prohibitions were indistinguishable from the speech restrictions invalidated

by this Court in *White* because neither "serve[s] the due-process rights of *parties*" to litigation. *Ibid.* While the court of appeals conceded that political parties are often litigants or otherwise interested in particular cases, it concluded that such conflicts could be addressed through recusal. *Id.* at 26a.

The Eighth Circuit then addressed Minnesota's interest in ensuring that its judiciary remains open-minded, rather than pre-committed, on issues of law. After this Court's decision in *White*, the Minnesota Supreme Court amended its Code of Judicial Conduct to emphasize that interest: "'Impartiality,'" the amended canons now declare, "denotes absence of bias or prejudice in favor of, or against, particular parties or classes of parties, *as well as maintaining an open mind in considering issues that may come before the judge*." App., *infra*, 49a (quoting 52 Minn. Stat., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5E (as amended Sept. 14, 2004)) (emphasis added).

The Eighth Circuit dismissed that interest, holding that preserving open-mindedness could not be the restrictions' true purpose because they were "woefully underinclusive." App., *infra*, 31a. Limits on a candidate's partisan activities during a judicial campaign, the court of appeals reasoned, cannot counteract "a lifetime of commitment" to a political party and its positions. *Ibid.* Further, that court of appeals held, the partisan-activities prohibition is too limited in scope, because it does not prohibit a judicial candidate from associating with "interest groups." *Id.* at 33a-35a. The court of appeals rejected the notion that there is any significant difference between powerful, well-organized political parties and special interest groups. *Id.* at 38a. And it likewise rejected the idea that Minnesota can "'take one step at a time, addressing itself to the phase of the problem which seems most acute * * * .'" *Id.* at 39a (quoting *Williamson* v. *Lee Optical*, 348 U.S. 483, 489 (1955)).

b. Finally, as respondents urged, the Eighth Circuit invalidated the solicitation clause insofar as it barred candi-

dates from personally soliciting contributions from "large groups" (an undefined phrase) and proscribed them from personally signing solicitation letters. App., *infra*, 41a-42a.

The court of appeals first rejected the dissenting judges' conclusion that intermediate scrutiny should apply to fund-raising activities. Personal solicitation of funds, the Eighth Circuit stated, is core political speech because the requested "funds [are] to be used in promoting a political message." App., *infra*, 42a.

The court of appeals then rejected Minnesota's contention that the solicitation clause advanced the State's compelling interest in an independent and impartial judiciary. App., *infra*, 44a-45a. Contributions still must be made to a campaign committee, which cannot disclose to the candidate who has and has not contributed. That mechanism, the Eighth Circuit held, was sufficient to protect the State's interest in preventing bias for or against particular parties. *Ibid.* The court did not explain how having the judge's signature (rather than that of the campaign committee chair) on letters soliciting funds would contribute to political discourse. It did not address the appearance of impropriety that arises when a sitting judge or a candidate personally asks, by letter or before a "large" audience, for money from individuals or lawyers who may have financial or other interests in the outcome of cases he or she may be asked to decide. *Id.* at 44a-46a. Nor did it explain how candidates could sign personal letters without noticing to whom they are addressed, saying only that "[a]n actual * * * candidate's signature on a contribution letter will not magically endow him or her with a power to divine * * * to whom that letter was sent." *Id.* at 44a.

4. Three judges dissented, and four others joined only portions of the majority opinion. The dissenters pointed out that the court had adopted "an approach to strict scrutiny that would deny the states the ability to defend their compelling interests, no matter how urgent the threat." App., *infra*, 47a. Unlike the announce clause at issue in *White*,

"[t]he partisan activities and solicitation clauses regulate how certain speech affects a judicial candidate's *relations with people, and organizations of people,* not the candidate's relations *with issues.*" *Id.* at 50a (emphasis added). "[T]he participation of judges who have been allowed or forced to make themselves dependent on party largesse for their continued tenure," the dissenters explained, "affects the state's ability to provide neutral judges and [to protect] the public perception of such neutrality." *Id.* at 56a.

The dissenters faulted the majority for ignoring the risk of corruption and the perception of corruption. App., *infra*, 52a. They observed that Congress, "to serve the great end" of "impartial execution of the laws," had barred *executive branch* employees from having "substantial roles in partisan political campaigns," and from "run[ning] for office on partisan political tickets." *Id.* at 53a (quoting *United States Civil Serv. Comm'n* v. *Nat'l Ass'n of Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. 548, 567 (1973)). If the need for "impartial[ity]" is a compelling interest for the executive branch, the dissenters observed, it is even "more important for the judicial branch." *Id.* at 54a. "The State has a compelling interest in keeping its judges free from the odor of self-interest or partisanship." *Id.* at 53a.

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE PETITION

The Eighth Circuit's decision in this case strikes down as unconstitutional two provisions of Minnesota's Code of Judicial Conduct critical to ensuring that the State's judiciary is—and is seen to be—above party politics and the corrupting influences of money. The decision has profound consequences not only for the States in the Eighth Circuit, but also for every State with judicial elections. Dozens of States with elected judiciaries have restrictions virtually indistinguishable from one or more of those invalidated by the Eighth Circuit here, and similar provisions appear in the ABA's Model Code. As a consequence of the Eighth Circuit's decision and a similar decision of the Eleventh

Circuit, *Weaver* v. *Bonner*, 309 F.3d 1312 (2002), eight States in those Circuits now confront binding precedent invalidating portions of their ethics codes regulating judicial campaigns.[3] Candidates and judges in the many other States with similar rules are uncertain about what conduct is proper, and those charged with overseeing compliance are unsure which prohibitions they may lawfully enforce. With 30 States holding supreme court elections in 2006,[4] this Court's immediate review is needed to resolve growing uncertainty in this important area of law.

The Eighth Circuit's decision intrudes severely on the States' ability to preserve the integrity and credibility of their judiciaries. Under it, judicial candidates are constitutionally entitled to seek money through signed letters sent to, and through in-person appeals before "large" groups of, current and potential litigants and their lawyers. This Court has repeatedly recognized the government's powerful interest in redressing money's corrosive effect on public confidence in the integrity of the political branches. See, *e.g.*, *McConnell* v. *Fed. Election Comm'n*, 540 U.S. 93, 136-137 (2002). The Eighth Circuit's decision undermines the States' even more powerful interest in preventing the fact or appearance of corruption that arises when judges and judicial candidates seek money from those who may have interests in the cases before them. In addition, the decision allows judicial candidates to engage in partisan activities, declaring allegiance to a political party and its platform. That is anathema to the States' compelling interest in having judicial branches that are and are seen to be non-political, nonpartisan, and impartial.

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[3] These States are Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Nebraska, and South Dakota. See p. 13-15 n.5, *infra*; App., *infra*, 323a-398a (collecting state codes).

[4] Justice at Stake, Scheduled Supreme Court Elections 2006-2008, avail. http://www.justiceatstake.org/files/SCElections06to08.pdf.

Regulations addressing the speech of judges and judicial candidates are, of course, subject to First Amendment scrutiny, as *Republican Party* v. *White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002), shows. But the Eighth Circuit misread *White* to preclude virtually any regulation of judicial elections, without regard to judges' unique status in our system of government or the highly attenuated nature of the First Amendment interests. The provisions at issue here are wholly different from the obsolete "announce clause" struck down in *White*. The solicitation clause does not restrict judicial candidates' speech about legal issues; it addresses only their requests for *money*. And the partisan-activities prohibition, far from restricting the *expression of viewpoints* important to judicial selection, regulates the *relationship* of judicial candidates to political parties. States have a compelling interest in preventing the judiciary from being or being seen as a political branch that behaves like the policy-making branches.

"The legitimacy of the Judicial Branch ultimately depends on its reputation for impartiality and nonpartisanship." *Mistretta* v. *United States*, 488 U.S. 361, 407 (1989). Consequently, the States' "interest in ensuring that judges be and appear to be neither antagonistic nor beholden to any interest, party, or person is entitled to the greatest respect." *Morial* v. *Judiciary Comm'n*, 565 F.2d 295, 302 (5th Cir. 1977), cert. denied, 435 U.S. 1013 (1978). Yet far from according respect to this most fundamental of State concerns, the Eighth Circuit adopted an interpretation of strict scrutiny that renders *any* judgment the State makes in this area either too sweeping to be narrowly tailored or too underinclusive to serve the stated rationale. App., *infra*, 47a, 79a. That deprives the States of a critical tool in their efforts to prevent their judicial systems from being transformed into "super-legislatures" for advancing partisan goals that could not be achieved through the political process—a result that should not be imposed absent review by this Court.

I. The Decision Below Resolves Overwhelmingly Important First Amendment Issues With Profound Consequences For State Judiciaries

A. The Decision Below Invalidates Restrictions On Personal Solicitation That Are Critical To Preserving Impartiality And Public Confidence In The Judiciary In Dozens Of States

Even in the context of the political branches, this Court consistently has recognized the potentially corrupting effect of money on the faithful discharge of official function and the corresponding erosion of public confidence. See, *e.g.*, *Buckley* v. *Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1, 37 (1976); *McConnell* v. *Fed. Election Comm'n*, 540 U.S. 93, 143-144 (2002). "Corruption is a subversion of the political process. Elected officials are influenced to act contrary to their obligations of office by the prospect of financial gain to themselves or infusion of money into their campaigns." *Fed. Election Comm'n* v. *Nat'l Conservative Political Action Comm'n*, 470 U.S. 480, 497 (1985). "Of almost equal concern as the danger of *actual* quid pro quo arrangements is the impact of the *appearance of corruption* * * * ." *Buckley*, 424 U.S. at 27 (emphasis added). The interest in combating corruption and the appearance of infidelity to duty in the *judicial* branch—where due process guarantees both the appearance and the reality of an impartial proceeding—is more compelling still. See *Marshall* v. *Jerrico, Inc.*, 446 U.S. 238, 242 (1980)).

For that reason, Minnesota and 28 other States have banned candidates for judicial office from personally soliciting money.[5] Under the Eighth Circuit's decision, however,

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[5] See Alaska Court Rules, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(3) (West 2006); 17A Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann., S. Ct. R. 81, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5B(3) (West 2005); Ark. Code Ann., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2) (Lexis Nexis 2005); Colo. Ct. Rules Ann., Ch. 24, Colo. Rules of Jud. Discipline, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7B(2)(d) (West 2005); Fla. Stat. Ann., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7C(1) (West 2005); Idaho Rules of Court, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2) (West 2001); Ill. Comp. Stat. Ann., Code of Jud. Cond., S. Ct. R. 67, Can. 7B(2) (West 2005); Ind. Code Ann. tit. 34,

letters asking for money, personally signed by judges or judicial candidates, may now be sent to the very persons who are likely to appear before them. App., *infra*, 46a. Likewise, judges may now personally ask for money before "large" groups—without regard to the interests that some persons in the group might have in the decisions of the court to which the candidate seeks election. *Ibid.* The Eleventh Circuit, in *Weaver* v. *Bonner*, 309 F.3d 1312, 1315 (2002), went further, striking down Georgia's bar on direct solicitation across the board, opening the door for judicial candidates to make in-person requests for money to anyone, including those who may appear before them. Those decisions intrude gravely on the States' ability to ensure their judicial systems both remain and appear above reproach.

Tellingly, the Eighth Circuit's decision fails to address the *appearance* of partiality and corruption that results when judges and candidates solicit money from those who

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Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2) (West 2002); Kan. S. Ct. R. 601A, Canon 5C(2) (West 2002); Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann., S. Ct. R. 4.300, Ky. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5B(2) (West 2005); La. Rev. Stat. Ann., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7D(1) (West 2005); Mich. Comp. Laws Ann., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7B(2)(a) (West 2005); Miss. Rules of Court, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2) (West 2005); Mo. Rules of Court, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5B(2) (West 2005); Neb. Court Rules & Procedure, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2) (West 2005); N.Y. Judiciary Law, app., N.Y. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5A(5) (McKinney 2003); N.D. Court Rules, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2) (West 2005); Ohio Rev. Code Ann., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7(C)(2)(a) (West 2005); Okla. Stat. Ann., tit. 5, ch. 1, app. 4, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2) (West 2001 & Supp. 2005); Or. Rules of Court, Code of Jud. Cond., R. 4-102(D) (2005); Pa. Cons. Stat. Ann., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7B(2) (West Supp. 2005); S.D. Codified Laws, ch. 12-16, app., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2) (Lexis Nexis 2005); Tenn. Rules of Court, S. Ct. R. 10, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2)(a) (West 2005); Utah Code of Jud. Admin., ch. 12, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2) (Lexis Nexis 2001); Wash. Ct. Rules, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7B(2) (West 2000); W. Va. Code Ann., State Court Rules, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2) (Lexis Nexis 2004); Wis. Code Ann. ch. 60, S. Ct. R. 60.06(4) (West 2005); Wyo. Court Rules Ann., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2) (Lexis Nexis 2005).

may appear before them. The Eighth Circuit ruled that Minnesota must tolerate such solicitation because, under an unchallenged portion of Canon 5, campaign committees provide a buffer between donors and candidates. Invoking the due process standard, the Eighth Circuit declared it "unlikely" that a judicial candidate would, once elected, have "a direct, personal, substantial, pecuniary interest in reaching a conclusion [for or] against" a particular litigant because the campaign committee would shield the judge from learning who contributed and who did not. App., *infra*, 44a (quoting *Tumey* v. *Ohio*, 273 U.S. 510, 532 (1927)). But that myopic focus ignores the perspective of the individuals solicited, who may feel pressured to give, then feel entitled to a quid pro quo when they do. It ignores the perspective of those who are unsuccessful in court, who may never accept that their case was adjudicated on the merits, rather than on the money. And it ignores the perspective of the general public, whose confidence in the judicial system is bound to be compromised by the sight of judges with their hands out.[6] Ignoring those consequences does not make them go away.[7]

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[6] See, *e.g.*, Nat'l Ctr. for State Courts, *How the Public Views the State Courts: A 1999 National Survey*, 8 (1999), avail. at http://www.ncsconline.org/WC/Publications/Res_AmtPTC_PublicViewCrtsPub.pdf (finding that 78% of respondents agree that "Elected judges are influenced by having to raise campaign funds"); Memorandum from S. Greenberg, Chairman and CEO, Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, Inc. & L. DiVall, President, American Viewpoint, to G. Palast, Executive Director, Justice at Stake Campaign 1 (Feb. 14, 2002), avail. at http://www.greenbergresearch.com/publications/reports/rJASsummary.pdf ("Seventy-six percent of voters * * * believe that campaign contributions made to judges have at least some influence on their decisions.").

[7] The Eighth Circuit's decision also improperly deems the State's interest in impartiality insufficiently compelling *unless necessary* to avoid a due process violation. But the State's interest in preserving the integrity of and public confidence in its judiciary is not limited to protecting the bare rudiments of fairness mandated by due process. See, *e.g.*, *Mills* v. *Rogers*, 457 U.S. 291, 303 (1982) (recognizing that States may "require

As Justice Kennedy has stated, "the law commands allegiance only if it commands respect. It commands respect only if the public thinks the judges are neutral." *Frontline: Justice for Sale* (PBS television broadcast Nov. 23, 1999) (transcript avail. http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/justice/interviews/supremo.html). The prohibition on personal solicitation adopted by Minnesota and more than two dozen other States is intended to preserve neutrality and public respect. It should not be cast aside without the benefit of this Court's considered review.

B. The Decision Below Eliminates Protections Essential To The Preservation Of Truly Nonpartisan Judicial Elections In Numerous States

The Eighth Circuit's decision also eviscerates the States' ability to keep their judiciaries free from the specter of partisan political influence. Most States and the United States have adopted codes of conduct that bar sitting judges from involving themselves in politics. See, *e.g.*, Code of Cond. for United States Judges, Canon 7 (a federal judge should not "make speeches for a political organization or candidate," "attend political gatherings," or "engage in *any other political activity*," except activities to improve the administration of justice described in Canon 4) (emphasis added); Fed. Code of Cond. for Jud. Employees, Canon 5; App., *infra*, 328a-393a (collecting state codes).

Minnesota's Canon 5A(1) applies similar rules to judges and judicial candidates alike, declaring that they shall not "identify themselves as members of a political organization, except as necessary to vote in an election" or "attend po-

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greater protection of relevant liberty interests than the minimum adequate to survive scrutiny under the Due Process Clause"); *Cox* v. *Louisiana*, 379 U.S. 559 (1965) (upholding prohibition on picketing near courthouse with intent to influence the judge even though such picketing would not violate due process). Due process is a floor, not a ceiling. The Eighth Circuit's decision inverts that relationship, hobbling the States' ability to provide anything beyond minimum constitutional protections.

litical gatherings." Minnesota's Canon 5B(2) reinforces that, barring candidates and campaign committees from "seek[ing], accept[ing] or us[ing] political organization endorsements." Nine other States with nonpartisan judicial elections impose similar restrictions on judicial candidates.[8]

Those restrictions are critical to preserving "the freedom of [judicial] officials from the control of partisan politics." *In re Amendment of the Code of Judicial Conduct*, No. C4-85-697, slip op. at 4-5 (Minn. Sept. 14, 2004). As the ABA explained when adopting similar rules in its first canons 80 years ago, "'it is inevitable that suspicion of being warped by political bias will attach to a judge who becomes an active promoter of the interests of one political party as against another.'" App., *infra*, 273a (quoting ABA Canon 28 (1924)). The Eighth Circuit's decision sweeps those considered judgments aside—potentially as to judges and judicial candidates alike. See pp. 26-30, *infra*. Moreover, it thwarts the possibility of reform in other nonpartisan States, where the creeping influence of party politics has

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[8] Of the 19 States with some nonpartisan judicial elections, nine limit statements of party affiliation. Ark. Code Ann., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5A(1)(f) and 5C(1)(a)(iii) (Lexis Nexis 2005); Fla. Stat. Ann., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7C(3) (West 2005); Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann., S. Ct. R. 4.300, Ky. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5A(2) (West 2005); 52 Minn. Stat. Ann., Minn. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5A(1)(a); Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-973 (West 2005); Nev. Rev. Stat. Ann., S. Ct. Rules, Part VI, Nev. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(1)(ii); Or. Rules of Court, Code of Jud. Cond., R. 4-102(C); S.D. Codified Laws, ch. 12-16, App., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(1)(a)(ii) (Lexis Nexis 2005); Wash. Ct. Rules, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7(A)(1)(e) (West 2000); Wis. Code Ann., ch. 60, S. Ct. R. 60.06(2)(b) (West 2005). Arkansas and Florida allow speaking at party gatherings if the candidate's opponent is also invited to speak. Ark. Code Ann., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(1); Fla. Stat. Ann., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7C(3). Three States prohibit seeking party endorsement. Ark. Code Ann., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5A(1)(d); Idaho Rules of Court, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5A(1)(d); Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-973.

the potential to render (or in some cases has already rendered) the elections nonpartisan in name only.

As the dissenting opinion below observed, partisan activities threaten to establish a system in which "candidates [must] plac[e] themselves in debt to powerful and wide-reaching political organizations that can make them or break them in each election." App., *infra*, 49a. The effects are easily envisioned: decisions split along party lines, opinions or votes that appear directed to obtaining party support in the face of future elections, and favoritism and patronage toward the party faithful. See CA Br. of Amicus Curiae Conf. of Chief Justices 13-15 (Aug. 10, 2004). The effect of permitting political party entanglement in nominally nonpartisan judicial elections is readily apparent in States like Michigan and Ohio.[9] It is no surprise that lawyers in Indiana—the one State that has partisan, nonpartisan and merit-retention elections—ranked partisan elections last when polled on their views of judicial selection systems. C. Solida, *The Two Sides of Merit Selection*, Ind. Lawyer, Sept. 16, 1998, at 1.

There is "a fundamental tension between the ideal character of the judicial office and the real world of electoral politics." *Chisom* v. *Roemer*, 501 U.S. 380, 400 (1991). Minnesota has an interest of the highest order in mitigating that tension to preserve the integrity of its judicial system. It, like many other States, legitimately chose to do so by separating the judicial process, and the judicial selection process, from partisan competition for political control. If that judgment is to be set aside, it should be set aside only by this Court.

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[9] Although party labels appear nowhere on either State's judicial ballot, the parties in fact choose and help bankroll the "independent" candidates, who without that support have essentially no hope of victory. See, *e.g.*, D. Goldberg *et al.*, *The New Politics of Judicial Elections 2004*, (2004) avail. http://www.justiceatstake.org/files/NewPoliticsReport2004.pdf. Minnesota has a compelling interest in choosing a different course.

C. The Decision Below Tramples The States' Authority To Structure Their Own Governments

It is "[t]hrough the structure of its government" that "a state defines itself as a sovereign." *Gregory* v. *Ashcroft*, 501 U.S. 452, 460 (1991). The Eighth Circuit's ruling cuts deeply into the States' ability, as sovereigns in our federal system, to craft their governments to include elected but nonetheless independent judiciaries.

1. Most States have structured their governments—like the federal government—so that the judicial branch is explicitly non-political, setting it apart from the legislative and executive branches. As the Minnesota Supreme Court explained in connection with the partisan-activities clause:

> [T]he separation of powers inherent in the creation of three distinct branches of government, * * * provides the constitutional underpinning for the independence of the Minnesota judiciary. As the executive and legislative branches are inextricably intertwined with partisan politics, maintenance of an independent judicial branch is reliant on the freedom of its officials from the control of partisan politics.

In re Amendment of the Code of Jud. Cond., *supra*, at 4-5.

Because judges represent "the Law," they—unlike their "counterparts in the political branches"—"are expected to refrain from catering to particular constituencies * * * . Their mission is to decide 'individual cases and controversies' * * *, neutrally applying legal principles, and, when necessary, 'stand[ing] up to what is generally supreme in a democracy: the popular will,' Scalia, *The Rule of Law as a Law of Rules*, 56 U. Chi. L. Rev. 1175, 1180 (1989)." App., *infra*, 159a-160a (Ginsburg, J., dissenting). Rewarding supporters, building coalitions, and supporting the "party line" may be salutary, even necessary, for those elected officials whose role is to reflect the people's will. But that is not and should not be seen as the nature of the judicial process.

Most courts have a Chief Judge or Chief Justice. None has, nor should have, a majority whip.

The Eighth Circuit, however, belittled the State's interest in having two political branches and a distinct, nonpolitical judicial branch. However basic "separation of powers" may be to "Minnesota's constitution," that court stated, "the right to free political speech and association guaranteed by the First Amendment is no less basic a concept. Indeed, First Amendment rights are even more fundamental," because the "right to free and open elections undergirds the framework of government established by any constitution." App., *infra*, 20a n.7. But the question is not whether the First Amendment or the independence of the judiciary (which must protect First Amendment rights) is more important. It is whether the balance Minnesota struck is permissible. Nowhere did the Eighth Circuit explain how the purpose of judicial elections is advanced by partisan affiliations that conflict with the judicial function by rendering judges and candidates beholden—in appearance if not actuality—to powerful political parties rather than to the rule of law.

2. The Eighth Circuit's decision also intrudes on more than a century and a half of State efforts to make their judicial systems fairer, more impartial, and free from partisan influence or control. As discussed above, the move to judicial elections early in this Nation's history was a response to "[c]oncerns about the penetration of partisanship into the appointive judicial selection process." Hall, 45 Historian at 346; see pp. 1-2, *supra*. Reformers believed that, under an elective system, "parti[s]an influences never could wholly prevail, nor popular opinion be moulded and controlled by demagogues." Nelson, *supra*, at 195 (quoting Report of the Debates & Proceedings in the New York State Convention, for the Revision of the Constitution 484 (Albany 1846) (remarks of Conrad Swackhamer)). When the influence of partisan politics threatened judicial independence by making judges reliant on parties for

election and re-election, States adopted the further reform of nonpartisan elections.[10]

The restrictions struck down by the Eighth Circuit in this case represent Minnesota's considered effort to protect the unique function of judges in its system of government. Unlike legislators, judges decide only the cases before them, as framed by the litigants, not any issues on which they might wish to opine. Unlike legislators, judges are bound by the doctrine of stare decisis (whether interpreting positive law or developing common law). And unlike legislators, judges may not decide issues based on party loyalties or their personal views of wise social policy. The political branches "represent[] 'the People'; the judge represents the Law—which often requires him to rule against the People." *Chisom*, 501 U.S. at 411 (Scalia, J., dissenting). The Eighth Circuit's refusal to recognize any distinction between electing judges and electing lawmakers blinks reality and disrupts the States' efforts to select a judiciary that is both apolitical and truly independent.

3. Finally, the Eighth Circuit's decision reflects an unfortunate disregard for the important role of the States in defining their own institutions. Indeed, the decision goes

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[10] In the 1960s and 1970s, several States adopted new constitutions or amendments that provided for judges to be appointed in the first instance, to be followed by retention elections. See W. Hall & L. Aspin, *What Twenty Years of Judicial Retention Elections Have Told Us*, 70 Judicature 340, 340 (1987). More recent history has shown, however, that voters are increasingly "unlikely to disenfranchise themselves and amend their state constitutions" by eliminating popular ballot as a means of judicial selection. E. Chemerinsky, *Preserving an Independent Judiciary: The Need for Contribution and Expenditure Limits in Judicial Elections*, 74 Chi.-Kent L. Rev. 133, 149 (1998). Consequently, many States in the last 25 years have adopted nonpartisan elections as a means of reform. See Ga. Const. art. 6, § 7, ¶ I (amend. July 1, 1983); Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-976 (West 1999); Miss. Laws, ch. 301, § 16 (Jan. 15, 1999); Ark. Const. Amend. 80, § 18 (approved Nov. 7, 2000, eff. July 1, 2001); Gen. Assembly Of North Carolina Session 2001, Session Law 2002-158, Senate Bill 1054 (2001).

so far as to accuse the *Minnesota Supreme Court* of violating *state* separation of powers principles by issuing Canon 5 "without apparent constitutional or statutory authority" under state law. App., *infra*, 20a n.7. But the federal courts have no role in determining a state court's authority under state law. Even where plaintiffs challenge executive conduct on state-law grounds, federal courts must stay their hands. *Penhurst State Sch. & Hosp.* v. *Halderman*, 465 U.S. 89, 121 (1984). The Eighth Circuit's unwarranted attack on court-promulgated judicial codes cannot stand.[11]

Ultimately, rather than respect the States' continuing efforts as "laboratories" to enhance judicial competence and independence, see *New State Ice Co.* v. *Liebmann*, 285 U.S. 371, 386-387 (1932) (Brandeis, J., dissenting), the decision below disdains any system of judicial selection that differs from the federal model. The Eighth Circuit did not merely confess "bias in favor of a system for the appointment of judges." App., *infra*, 9a. Rather, the author of the Court's *en banc* opinion previously opined that the goal of neutrality "could be most efficiently and effectively achieved by amending the Minnesota Constitution to allow for the appointment rather than the election of judges." *Id.* at 270a (Beam, J., dissenting). But it was the *failure* of the appointment system in many States that led to the popular ballot as a re-

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[11] Most state supreme courts have grants of authority similar to Minnesota's, or promulgate rules under their inherent authority. See, *e.g.*, Ala. Const. art. IV, § 147(c); Ga. Const. art. 6, § 7, ¶ VII; Fla. Const. art. V (see also *Chandler* v. *State*, 366 So. 2d 64 (Fla. App. 1978)); Ill. Const. 1970, art. VI, § 136(a); Ky. Const. §121; Mo. Const. art. 5, §§ 5 & 24; Nev. Const. art. 6, § 21; N.Y. Const. art. 6, § 20; N.C.G.S.A. § 7A-10.1; N.D. Stat. § 27-23-03; Ohio Const. art. IV, § 5; Okla. Stat. Ann. § 1404; Or. Const. art. VII, § 8; 42 Pa. Code Stat. Ann. § 1722(a)(2); Pa. Const. art. 5, § 18; R.I. Const. art. 3, § 8; Tex. Const. art. 5, § 1-a; 4 Vt. Stat. Ann. § 3; Va. Stat. § 54.1-3909; Wash. Const. art. IV, § 31; W. Va. Const. art. 8, § 18; Wyo. Const. art. 5, § 6; *In re Petition of Judicial Conduct Committee*, 855 A.2d 535 (N.H. 2004) (inherent power); *In re Dunleavy*, 838 A.2d 338 (Me. 2003) (same); *In re Promulgation of a Code of Judicial Ethics*, 153 N.W.2d 873, 155 N.W.2d 665 (Wis. 1967) (same).

form, and the entanglement between candidates and political parties that led to nonpartisan ballots as a further reform. Besides, simply prescribing the federal model—a "solution" that would require the legislatures and voters of numerous States to amend state constitutions to set aside longstanding methods of judicial selection—is no solution at all.

D. Confusion Reigns In State And Federal Courts

The law concerning State regulation of judicial elections is in disarray. The candidates, the courts, and the officials who must enforce the law desperately require guidance. As one trial court observed:

> To say there is considerable uncertainty regarding the scope of the Supreme Court's decision in *White* is an understatement. Whether the decision in *White* left *any* room for the regulation of the speech of judicial candidates is a question yet to be resolved. * * * It has caused, and will continue to cause, considerable uncertainty and consternation on the part of judicial candidates.

N.D. Family Alliance v. *Bader*, 361 F. Supp. 2d 1021, 1041-1042 (D.N.D. 2005); see R. Salokar, *After White: An Insider's Thoughts on Judicial Campaign Speech*, 26 Just. Sys. J. 149 (2005) (detailing difficulty in applying *White* in Florida).

Some federal courts have read *White* broadly to imply that judicial speech is no different from speech in other elections, so that the challenged restrictions invariably fail strict scrutiny review. For example, striking down Georgia's ban on personal solicitation *sua sponte*, the Eleventh Circuit declared: "[W]e believe that the Supreme Court's decision in *White* suggests that the standard for judicial elections should be the same as the standard for legislative and executive elections." *Weaver*, 309 F.3d at 1321; see also *Bader*, 361 F. Supp. 2d at 1042; *Family Trust Found. of Ky.* v. *Wolnitzek*, 345 F. Supp. 2d 672 (E.D. Ky. 2004);

Spargo v. *N.Y. State Comm'n on Judicial Conduct*, 244 F. Supp. 2d 72, 88 (N.D.N.Y. 2003), vacated on other grounds, 351 F.3d 65 (2003), cert. denied, 541 U.S. 1085 (2004).

White itself, however, disavows any such suggestion: "[W]e neither assert nor imply that the First Amendment requires campaigns for judicial office to sound the same as those for legislative office." App., *infra*, 139a. Accordingly, many courts refused to extend *White* beyond the obsolete "announce" clause at issue in that case. See, *e.g.*, *In re Raab*, 793 N.E.2d 1287 (N.Y. 2003) (upholding prohibition on judges contributing to political campaigns as essential to preventing political bias and corruption); *In re Watson*, 794 N.E.2d 1 (N.Y. 2003) (upholding New York's "pledges and promises" clause as essential to impartiality in the state judiciary); *In re Kinsey*, 842 So. 2d 77 (Fla. 2003) ("pledges or promises clause" distinguishable from the announce clause at issue in *White*, because judges may state their opinions, so long as they ensure that voters understand a judge's duty to uphold the constitution and laws of the state); *In re Angel*, 31 Fla. Bar News, No. 13 (July 1, 2004) (while "[e]very judicial election presents * * * a great opportunity * * * to educate our citizens about the proper role and responsibility of the Third Branch, * * * absolute impartiality and freedom from partisan influences are the most important of these responsibilities. * * * [J]udicial elections present a * * * risk that * * * confidence * * * will be undermined * * * if the public perception is that judges may act in a partisan manner—rather than strictly adhere to the Rule of Law."); *In re Dunleavy*, 838 A.2d 338 (Me. 2003) (upholding provision barring judges from soliciting "funds for, pay[ing] an assessment to, or mak[ing] a contribution to a political organization or candidate * * *," because "[i]t is exactly this activity that potentially creates a bias, or at least the appearance of a bias, for or against a party to a proceeding").

II. The Eighth Circuit Erred in Striking Down Minnesota's Rules

Far from supporting the Eighth Circuit's decision, this Court's decision in *White* underscores the legitimacy of the solicitation and the partisan-activities restrictions at issue here. *White* acknowledged the State's interest in "preserving the impartiality of the state judiciary and preserving the appearance of the impartiality of the state judiciary," particularly "the lack of bias for or against either *party* to the proceeding." App., *infra*, 130a-131a. It merely faulted the regulation at issue there because, rather than regulate the judicial candidate's relationship to *parties* with potential interests in litigation, it regulated the candidate's expression of *ideas* relevant to his performance of the judicial function. Here, in contrast, neither canon restricts the ability of judicial candidates to address *issues* relevant to their performance as judges, and neither forestalls vigorous public debate. The provisions here merely address *relationships* with interested persons and parties—relationships that can create actual or apparent party bias, and interfere with judicial independence, by rendering the candidate seemingly beholden to political parties.

A. The Solicitation Clause Is Constitutional

Minnesota's restriction on direct solicitation serves precisely the interest this Court recognized in *White*. Surveys show that most people believe that "elected judges are influenced by having to raise campaign funds." Nat'l Ctr. for State Courts, *How the Public Views the State Courts*, *supra*, at 8. That impression is compounded when judges and candidates solicit money from those who have or may have cases in their courts. The clause is also narrowly tailored. It does not proscribe fundraising altogether. It simply requires that solicitations come from a campaign committee—not from the person who is expected to rule impartially on all matters coming before the court.

Unlike the restriction at issue in *White*, moreover, the solicitation clause has virtually no effect on speech. It regu-

lates only particularly problematic proposals with little expressive content—requests for money—not by barring them but by separating the solicitation from the judicial candidate.[12] For that reason, the Eighth Circuit erred in applying strict scrutiny. Regulations that deal not with speech but with the potentially corrosive effect of money should be subject to the "less demanding" standard of intermediate scrutiny. *McConnell*, 540 U.S. at 136.

Even under strict scrutiny, however, the solicitation clause is constitutional. The Eighth Circuit's primary rationale in reaching the contrary conclusion was its view that *actual corruption* is a relatively minor risk. App., *infra*, 43a-44a. But that fails to address the States' equally compelling interest in preventing the *appearance* of impropriety. Whether from the viewpoint of the donor, the losing litigant, or the public as a whole, States have a compelling interest in addressing even the "appearance of corruption stemming from public awareness of the opportunities for abuse." *Buckley*, 424 U.S. at 27; see *McConnell*, 540 U.S. 93, 134-152 (repeatedly upholding the compelling interest in avoiding the appearance of corruption); p. 15, *supra*. Particularly given the minimal impact on speech, Minnesota's effort to keep its courts above such suspicions should be respected.

B. The Partisan-Activities Prohibition Is Constitutional

Contrary to the Eighth Circuit's decision, the partisan-activities clause likewise survives constitutional scrutiny consistent with *White*. The court of appeals viewed partisan

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[12] As Justice Stevens stated in his concurring opinion in *Nixon* v. *Shrink Mo. Gov't PAC*, 528 U.S. 377 (2000), "Speech has the power to inspire volunteers * * *. Money, meanwhile, has the power to pay hired laborers to perform the same tasks. It does not follow, however, that the First Amendment provides the same measure of protection to the use of money to accomplish such goals as it provides to the use of ideas to achieve the same results." *Id.* at 398.

activities and associations as essentially equivalent to the "announce" restrictions in *White*. According to the Eighth Circuit, such associations serve as a convenient short-hand for the candidate's agreement with a party on significant issues. App., *infra*, 24a-25a. Even setting aside the questionable value of such short-hands in the judicial context—particularly given a candidate's ability to speak on the issues directly—a candidate's partisan activities do much more than signal potential agreement on issues. They also establish a *relationship* between the judicial candidate and powerful political parties, as well as their leaders and adherents, who are keenly interested in the candidate's resolution of a wide range of cases. The goal of the partisan-activities clause is to "prevent judicial candidates from incurring, or seeming to incur, debts to political parties that could compromise their independence, while allowing them alternative means of communicating subjects of valid interests to voters." App., *infra*, 213a. As explained above, pp. 17-18, *supra*, such indebtedness erodes judicial independence. It gives political parties the ability to demand fealty not to the law, but to the party agenda. And it raises the specter of litigant-specific bias, since judicial candidates identified as partisan may, at the very least, *appear* partial toward particular litigants in certain cases. Citizens should not have to consider whether the judge is Republican or Democrat, or what the Republican or Democratic Party might think about their case, when they approach a court for evenhanded justice.

For similar reasons, Congress has restricted the political activities of federal employees. See 5 U.S.C. § 7323; 15 U.S.C. §§ 1501, 1502. As this Court explained when upholding the Hatch Act in *United States Civil Service Commission* v. *National Ass'n of Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. 548, 564-565 (1973):

> It seems fundamental in the first place that employees in the Executive Branch of the Government, or those working for any of its agencies, should admini-

> ster the law in accordance with the will of Congress, rather than in accordance with their own will or the will of a political party. They are expected to enforce the law and execute the programs of government without bias or favoritism for or against any political party or group or the members thereof. A major thesis of the Hatch Act is that to serve this great end of Government—*impartial execution of the laws*—it is essential that federal employees, for example, not take formal positions in political parties, not undertake substantial roles in partisan political campaigns, and not run for office on partisan political tickets. Forbidding activities like these will reduce the hazards to fair and effective government.

No less than executive branch officers, judges "should administer the law in accordance with the will of [the legislature], rather than in accordance with their own will or the will of a political party," and "without bias or favoritism for or against any political party or group or the members thereof." *Id.* at 564-565.

The Eighth Circuit's rationale cannot be reconciled with *Letter Carriers* or ordinary First Amendment principles. That court first reasoned that the prohibition on partisan political activities was fatally underinclusive because it addresses only associations with political parties and not other groups. App., *infra*, 33a-35a. But the Hatch Act provisions at issue in *Letter Carriers* do precisely the same thing—a fact the Eighth Circuit fails to address. Political parties are singularly powerful forces in government, with a unique ability to command allegiance from members on a wide range of issues, regardless of the members' own viewpoints. See *McConnell*, 540 U.S. at 188 ("Political parties have influence and power in the Legislature that vastly exceeds that of any interest group. As a result, it is hardly surprising that * * * parties in turn have special access to and relationships with federal officeholders."). No less than the Hatch Act, the partisan-activities restrictions at issue here

"reduce the hazards to fair and effective government," and further the compelling interest of maintaining both the fact and appearance of impartial application of the law.[13]

The Eighth Circuit also deemed those restrictions underinclusive because—although they always apply to judges—they bar "a judicial candidate from associative activities with a political party" only "during a campaign, though he may have been a life-long, active member of a political party." App., *infra*, 31a. But that analysis would invalidate *all* restrictions on the political activities of judges and executive branch employees. See pp. 16-17, 27-28, *supra*. Those prohibitions likewise do nothing to address the fact that an individual, before becoming a judge or employee, "may have been a life-long, active member of a political party." But they are hardly underinclusive as a result. They still serve the compelling interest of preserving both the fact and appearance of impartiality by enforcing the rule that, at some point, partisan activities must end. If those rules, which ban partisan activities only once the individual becomes a judge, are not fatally underinclusive, then *a fortiori* Minnesota's broader rule—which bans partisan activities both while candidates campaign for

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[13] The Eighth Circuit also opined that recusal poses a less-restrictive means of ensuring that judges do not preside over cases in which they may harbor bias. App., *infra*, 26a. But recusal is not a viable solution where partisan affiliation is at issue, because virtually every judge would have to recuse in redistricting disputes, for example, which pit the parties against each other. Virtually every judge would also have to recuse whenever a high-ranking party member or the party itself has an interest in the matter. In any event, even if recusals eventually secure the litigants an unbiased judge, they do nothing to address the erosion of public faith that results when parties must wander from chambers to chambers, like Diogenes, searching for an unbiased, nonpartisan judge to decide their case. There is no reason Minnesota should be precluded from proscribing judicial candidates from engaging in conduct that would disqualify them from performing their job in important cases.

judicial office and later when they become judges—is not underinclusive either.[14]

Minnesota has made the sensible determination that those campaigning to be judges must comport themselves just as they would once they become judges. To require Minnesota to extend its rules further and ban partisan activities before an individual even seeks judicial office, disqualifying those who have engaged in such conduct, is absurd. The fact that a judicial candidate may have supported or been supported by a party in some other past endeavor is hardly problematic; any other rule would reduce the available talent pool to a puddle. It is not until the individual becomes a candidate for judicial office that partisan affiliations raise serious concerns: Once candidates for judicial posts may seek party endorsements and run as party candidates for judicial positions, "the party becomes empowered to play the role of judge-maker"—and, in the case of re-election, a judge defeater. App., *infra*, 50a (dissenting opinion). By focusing its restriction on judicial candidates and judges, Minnesota has addressed the threat to judicial independence—and the perception that judges are indebted and beholden to powerful political interests for their tenure—that "is most overt." *Ibid.* Given the ability of judicial candidates to speak their mind on the issues, there is no compelling reason Minnesota should be constitutionally foreclosed from preventing partisan entanglement that threatens judicial independence and impartiality.

CONCLUSION

The petition for a writ of certiorari should be granted.

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[14] To the extent the Eighth Circuit read Canon 5 to permit judges to engage in partisan activities when not campaigning, it misread that rule, which applies to "judge[s]" and "candidate[s] for judicial office."

Respectfully submitted.

MIKE HATCH
Attorney General
State of Minnesota

KRISTINE L. EIDEN
Deputy Attorney General

THOMAS C. VASALY
Assistant Attorney General

445 Minnesota Street
Suite 1100
St. Paul, MN 55101-2128
(651) 296-6752

THOMAS R. PHILLIPS
Counsel of Record
BAKER BOTTS L.L.P.
1500 San Jacinto Center
98 San Jacinto Boulevard
Austin, TX 78701-4039
(512) 322-2500

JEFFREY A. LAMKEN
MICHAEL G. PATTILLO, JR.
JACOB A. SOMMER
BAKER BOTTS L.L.P.
1299 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20004-2400
(202) 639-7700

Counsel for Petitioners

October 2005

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE EIGHTH CIRCUIT

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; INDIAN ASIAN AMERICAN REPUBLICANS OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; REPUBLICAN SENIORS, AN ASSOCIATION; YOUNG REPUBLICAN LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA, A MINNESOTA NONPROFIT CORPORATION; MINNESOTA COLLEGE REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION,

PLAINTIFFS—APPELLANTS,

GREGORY F. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFF,

CHERYL L. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; MARK E. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; CORWIN C. HULBERT, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFFS—APPELLANTS,

CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE, AN ASSOCIATION,

PLAINTIFF,

MINNESOTA AFRICAN AMERICAN REPUBLIC COUNCIL, AN ASSOCIATION,

PLAINTIFF—APPELLANT,

MUSLIM REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION; MICHAEL MAXIM, INDIVIDUALLY; KEVIN J. KOLOSKY, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFFS,

V.

SUZANNE WHITE, IN HER CAPACITY AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE MINNESOTA BOARD ON JUDICIAL STANDARDS, OR HER SUCCESSOR; KENNETH L. JORGENSEN, IN HIS CAPACITY AS DIRECTOR OF THE MINNESOTA OFFICE OF LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, OR HIS SUCCESSOR; CHARLES E. LUNDBERG, IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIR OF THE

MINNESOTA LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BOARD, OR HIS SUCCESSOR,

DEFENDANTS—APPELLEES,

MINNESOTA CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION, AMICUS ON BEHALF OF APPELLANT,

THE MINNESOTA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION; THE CONFERENCE OF CHIEF JUSTICES; THE MISSOURI BAR; THE BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE AT NYU SCHOOL OF LAW; CAMPAIGNS FOR PEOPLE; CITIZEN ACTION/ILLINOIS; CONFERENCE OF AD HOC COMMITTEE OF FORMER JUSTICES AND FRIENDS; STATE OF ARKANSAS; ARKANSAS SUPREME COURT, AMICI ON BEHALF OF APPELLEES.

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; INDIAN ASIAN AMERICAN REPUBLICANS OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; REPUBLICAN SENIORS, AN ASSOCIATION; YOUNG REPUBLICAN LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA, A MINNESOTA NONPROFIT CORPORATION; MINNESOTA COLLEGE REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION; MINNESOTA AFRICAN AMERICAN REPUBLIC COUNCIL, AN ASSOCIATION; CHERYL L. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; MARK E. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; CORWIN C. HULBERT, INDIVIDUALLY; GREGORY F. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE, AN ASSOCIATION; MUSLIM REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION,

PLAINTIFFS,

MICHAEL MAXIM, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFF—APPELLANT,

KEVIN J. KOLOSKY, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFF,

V.

SUZANNE WHITE, IN HER CAPACITY AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE MINNESOTA BOARD ON JUDICIAL STANDARDS, OR HER SUCCESSOR; KENNETH L. JORGENSEN, IN HIS CAPACITY AS DIRECTOR OF THE MINNESOTA OFFICE OF LAWYERS

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, OR HIS SUCCESSOR; CHARLES E. LUNDBERG, IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIR OF THE MINNESOTA LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BOARD, OR HIS SUCCESSOR,

DEFENDANTS—APPELLEES,

THE MINNESOTA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION, AMICUS ON BEHALF OF APPELLEE,

THE CONFERENCE OF CHIEF JUSTICES; THE MISSOURI BAR; THE BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE AT NYU SCHOOL OF LAW; CAMPAIGNS FOR PEOPLE; CITIZEN ACTION/ILLINOIS; CONFERENCE OF AD HOC COMMITTEE OF FORMER JUSTICES AND FRIENDS; STATE OF ARKANSAS; ARKANSAS SUPREME COURT, AMICI ON BEHALF OF APPELLEES.

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; INDIAN ASIAN AMERICAN REPUBLICANS OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; REPUBLICAN SENIORS, AN ASSOCIATION; YOUNG REPUBLICAN LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA, A MINNESOTA NONPROFIT CORPORATION; MINNESOTA COLLEGE REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION,

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PLAINTIFF—APPELLANT,

CHERYL L. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; MARK E. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; CORWIN C. HULBERT, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFFS,

CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE, AN ASSOCIATION,

PLAINTIFF—APPELLANT,

MINNESOTA AFRICAN AMERICAN REPUBLIC COUNCIL, AN ASSOCIATION; MUSLIM REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION; MICHAEL MAXIM, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFFS,

KEVIN J. KOLOSKY, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFF—APPELLANT,

v.

SUZANNE WHITE, IN HER CAPACITY AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE MINNESOTA BOARD ON JUDICIAL STANDARDS, OR HER SUCCESSOR; KENNETH L. JORGENSEN, IN HIS CAPACITY AS DIRECTOR OF THE MINNESOTA OFFICE OF LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, OR HIS SUCCESSOR; CHARLES E. LUNDBERG, IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIR OF THE MINNESOTA LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BOARD, OR HIS SUCCESSOR,

DEFENDANTS—APPELLEES,

THE MINNESOTA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION, AMICUS ON BEHALF OF APPELLEES,

THE CONFERENCE OF CHIEF JUSTICES; THE MISSOURI BAR; THE BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE AT NYU SCHOOL OF LAW; CAMPAIGNS FOR PEOPLE; CITIZEN ACTION/ILLINOIS; CONFERENCE OF AD HOC COMMITTEE OF FORMER JUSTICES AND FRIENDS; STATE OF ARKANSAS; ARKANSAS SUPREME COURT, AMICI ON BEHALF OF APPELLEES.

Nos. 99-4021, 99-4025, 99-4029

Submitted: Oct. 20, 2004
Filed: Aug. 2, 2005

Before LOKEN, Chief Judge, McMILLIAN, JOHN R. GIBSON, WOLLMAN, BEAM, MORRIS SHEPPARD ARNOLD, MURPHY, BYE, RILEY, SMITH, COLLOTON, GRUENDER, and BENTON, Circuit Judges, en banc.

BEAM, Circuit Judge.

This case is before us en banc upon remand from the United States Supreme Court. We briefly outline what has occurred in this matter since its inception, believing that it will be helpful in analyzing the issues presented.

The dispute commenced in the United States District Court for the District of Minnesota. At issue were the so called "announce," "partisan-activities," and "solicitation" clauses of Canon 5 of the Minnesota Supreme Court's canons of judicial conduct. The district court rejected Appellants' First and Fourteenth Amendment claims, *Republican Party of Minn. v. Kelly*, 63 F. Supp. 2d 967 (D. Minn. 1999), and granted summary judgment to Appellees: the Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards, the Minnesota Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board, and the Minnesota Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility. *Id.* at 986. On appeal, a divided panel of this court affirmed the district court. *Republican Party of Minn. v. Kelly*, 247 F.3d 854 (8th Cir. 2001). We denied Appellants' en banc suggestion. The Supreme Court granted certiorari and held, *Republican Party of Minn. v. White*, 536 U.S. 765, 122 S.Ct. 2528, 153 L. Ed. 2d 694 (2002), that the announce clause violates the First Amendment, reversing our holding in *Kelly*. The Court remanded the case for further proceedings consistent with its opinion. *Id.* at 788, 122 S.Ct. 2528. Upon remand, the same panel, divided as before, again affirmed the district court's ruling on the solicitation clause and remanded for further consideration in light of *White* of the partisan-activities clause. *Republican Party of Minn. v. White*, 361 F.3d 1035 (8th Cir. 2004) (vacated). We granted Appellants' request for en banc review, vacating the panel opinion. Today, we find that the partisan-activities and solicitation clauses also violate the First Amendment. Accordingly, we reverse the district court and remand the case with instructions to enter summary judgment in favor of Appellants.

The Supreme Court's remand requires us to consider two issues in light of *White*: the constitutional viability of the partisan-activities and solicitation clauses of Canon 5.[1]

In doing so, we give no deference to earlier panel opinions.

> [L]egal propositions which an appellate court settles on appeal ordinarily cannot be questioned again, ... A corollary to [this principle] is the rule that, upon a reversal and remand for further consistent proceedings, the case goes back . . . for a new determination of the issues presented as though they had not been determined before, pursuant to the legal principles enunciated in the appellate court's opinion, which must be taken as the law of the case.

Poletti v. C.I.R., 351 F.2d 345, 347 (8th Cir. 1965). Thus, our task is to take the "legal principles enunciated in" *White* and apply them to the partisan-activities and solicitation clauses for a determination of these claims "as though they had not been determined before." *Id.* And that is what we have done.

I. BACKGROUND

Canon 5A(1) and 5B(1), the partisan-activities clause, and B(2), the solicitation clause, rein in the political speech and association of judicial candidates in Minnesota. The partisan-activities clause states, in relevant part:

> Except as authorized in Section 5B(1), a judge or a candidate for election to judicial office shall not:
>
> (a) identify themselves as members of a political organization, except as necessary to vote in an election;
>
> . . . .

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[1] Since our ruling today essentially moots any viable Fourteenth Amendment claims, we leave them for consideration on another day, if necessary.

> (d) attend political gatherings; or seek, accept or use endorsements from a political organization.

52 Minn. Stat. Ann., Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 5, subd. A(1)(a), (d). Section 5B(1)(a) provides that "[a] judge or a candidate for election to judicial office may . . . speak to gatherings, *other than political organization gatherings*, on his or her own behalf."[2] *Id.* at subd. B(1)(a) (emphasis added). The solicitation clause states,

> A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions or personally solicit publicly stated support. A candidate may, however, establish committees to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting campaign contributions and public support from lawyers, but shall not seek, accept or use political organization endorsements. Such committees shall not disclose to the candidate the identity of campaign contributors nor shall the committee disclose to the candidate the identity of those who were solicited for contribution or stated public support and refused such solicitation. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

Id. at subd. B(2).[3]

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[2] Canon 5 defines "political organization" as "an association of individuals under whose name a candidate files for partisan office"—a political party. Canon 5, subd. D.

[3] The dissent notes that an Advisory Committee was involved in post-*White* amendments to Canon 5. Minn. Stat. § 480.052. The

The facts of this case demonstrate the extent to which these provisions chill, even kill, political speech and associational rights. In his 1996 bid for a seat as an associate justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court, appellant Gregory Wersal (and others working on his behalf) identified himself as a member of the Republican Party of Minnesota, attended and spoke at the party's gatherings, sought the endorsement of the party, and personally solicited campaign contributions. In response to Wersal's appearance at and speech to a Republican Party gathering, a complaint was filed with the Minnesota Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board, alleging that Wersal's actions violated Canon 5A(1)(d). Although the Minnesota Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility (OLPR) ultimately dismissed the complaint, the complaint accomplished its chilling effect. Wersal, fearful that other complaints might jeopardize his opportunity to practice law, withdrew from the race.

Wersal made a second bid for a seat on the Minnesota Supreme Court in 1998. In 1997 and 1998, Wersal asked the OLPR for advisory opinions regarding the solicitation and partisan-activities clauses. The OLPR's response was mixed, stating it would not issue an opinion regarding personal solicitation, in light of proposed amendments to the Canon and the fact that there were no judicial elections scheduled that particular year. It also stated that it would

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Minnesota Supreme Court did make some amendments to Canon 5 to bring the provisions into line with the Supreme Court's "announce clause" ruling in *White*. But it should also be noted that the Advisory Committee recommended the deletion of parts of the partisan-activities clause of Canon 5 because the Committee believed, as do we, that it is not narrowly tailored. Several members of the Committee also noted, as do we, that the clause is impermissibly underinclusive because it applies only to political parties, and not to interest groups. The Minnesota Supreme Court was not responsive to these recommendations, and the partisan-activities and solicitation clauses at issue here are the same now as when this litigation was commenced.

enforce the partisan-activities clause. Wersal then initiated this litigation. In the meantime, he was forced to write several letters to individuals who had indicated they would speak on his behalf at Republican Party conventions across the state, asking them not to do so in order to avoid violating Canon 5 and imploring them to "[p]lease be patient. I hope for a decision from the Federal Courts soon." He also had his campaign's legal counsel advise the chairman of the Republican Party of Minnesota that Canon 5 would prohibit Wersal from accepting or using any endorsement from the party. There is no question that Wersal sought to work within the confines of Canon 5 even as he sought to challenge it—confines that in the most direct of ways restricted his political speech and association, compelling him at one point to end a political campaign.

II. DISCUSSION

A. Judicial Selection in Minnesota

Minnesota has chosen to elect the judges of its courts. Minn. Const. art. 6, § 7. "The fundamental law of this state is, and always has been, that the selection of judges must be submitted to the electors ...." *State ex rel. La Jesse v. Meisinger*, 258 Minn. 297, 103 N.W.2d 864, 866 (1960). Some thirty-three states employ some form of contested election for their trial courts of general jurisdiction, their appellate courts, or both. American Judicature Society, *Judicial Selection in the States: Appellate and General Jurisdiction Courts* (Jan. 2004). As federal judges, we confess some bias in favor of a system for the appointment of judges. Indeed, there is much to be said for appointing judges instead of electing them, perhaps the chief reason being the avoidance of potential conflict between the selection process and core constitutional protections. In promoting the newly drafted United States Constitution, Hamilton argued in *Federalist No. 78* that if the people were to choose judges through either an election or a

process whereby electors chosen by the people would select them, the judges would harbor "too great a disposition to consult popularity to justify a reliance that nothing would be consulted but the Constitution and the laws." *The Federalist No. 78*, at 439 (Alexander Hamilton) (Clinton Rossiter ed., 1961). Arguably, concerns about judicial independence and partisan influence, posited by Minnesota as grounds for regulating judicial election speech, are generated, fundamentally, not by the exercise of political speech or association, but by concerns surrounding the uninhibited, robust and wide-open processes often involved in the election of judges in the first place. As Justice O'Connor noted in her *White* concurrence, "the very practice of electing judges undermines [an] interest" in an actual and perceived impartial judiciary. 536 U.S. at 788, 122 S.Ct. 2528.

Yet, there is obvious merit in a state's deciding to elect its judges, especially those judges who serve on its appellate courts. It is a common notion that while the legislative and executive branches under our system of separated powers make and enforce public policy, it is the unique role of the judicial branch to *interpret*, and be quite apart from making that policy.

But the reality is that "[t]he policymaking nature of appellate courts is clear." Michael R. Dimino, *Pay No Attention To That Man Behind the Robe: Judicial Elections, The First Amendment, and Judges as Politicians*, 21 Yale L. & Pol'y Rev. 301, 364 (2003) (citing Henry R. Glick, *Policy Making and State Supreme Courts, in The American Courts: A Critical Assessment* 87 (John B. Gates & Charles A. Johnson eds., 1991)); Stephen J. Ware, *Money, Politics and Judicial Decisions: A Case Study of Arbitration Law in Alabama*, 30 Cap. U.L. Rev. 583, 594 (2002) ("[It is a] myth that courts are apolitical and do not make policy. The Legal Realists exploded that myth and showed that judges do make policy. This is especially true of judges on states' highest courts."). Courts must often fill gaps

created by legislation. And in particular, by virtue of what state appellate courts are called upon to do in the scheme of state government, they find themselves as a matter of course in a position to establish policy for the state and her citizens. "At the [state] appellate level, common-law functions such as the adoption of a comparative fault standard, or the determination of a forced spousal share of intestate property distribution, require a judiciary that is sensitive to the views of state citizens." Kathryn Abrams, *Relationships of Representation in Voting Rights Act Jurisprudence*, 71 Tex. L. Rev. 1409, 1425 (1993). The courts' policy-making power is, of course, ever subject to the power of the legislature to enact statutes that override such policy. But that in no way diminishes the reality that courts are involved in the policy process to an extent that makes election of judges a reasonable alternative to appointment.

Without question, Minnesota may choose (and has repeatedly chosen) to elect its appellate judges. The very nature of its sovereignty within our federal system guarantees that. "[A] crucial axiom of our [federal form of] government [is that] the States have wide authority to set up their state and local governments as they wish." *McMillian v. Monroe County, Ala.*, 520 U.S. 781, 795, 117 S.Ct. 1734, 138 L. Ed. 2d 1 (1997). Indeed, "[t]hrough the structure of its government ... a State defines itself as a sovereign." *Gregory v. Ashcroft*, 501 U.S. 452, 460, 111 S.Ct. 2395, 115 L. Ed. 2d 410 (1991). Of course, that power of state self-determination is not boundless. "[It is an] axiom that, under our federal system, the States possess sovereignty concurrent with that of the Federal Government, subject ... to limitations imposed by the Supremacy Clause." *Id.* at 457, 111 S.Ct. 2395. The Supremacy Clause provides that the Constitution, and laws and treaties made pursuant to it, are the supreme law of the land. U.S. Const. art. VI, cl. 2. When a state engineers its governmental structure or processes in a way that curtails

liberties guaranteed by the Constitution, that presumption of state self-determination is replaced, in this case, by a careful—even critical—judicial inquiry fashioned by the particular liberty at issue. If Minnesota sees fit to elect its judges, which it does, it must do so using a process that passes constitutional muster.

B. The First Amendment and Political Speech

Within this context, Minnesota has enacted Canon 5 in an effort to regulate judicial elections. In *White*, the Court held the announce clause of Canon 5, which prohibits judicial candidates from stating their views on disputed legal issues, unconstitutional. It falls to us now to determine whether the partisan-activities and solicitation clauses of Canon 5 are acceptable under the First Amendment.

The First Amendment commands that "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech." U.S. Const. amend. I. Freedom of association is inherently a part of those liberties protected by the First Amendment. *See Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1, 15, 96 S.Ct. 612, 46 L. Ed. 2d 659 (1976) ("The First Amendment protects political association as well as political expression."). If it were not so, many of the Amendment's guarantees would ring hollow.

> An individual's freedom to speak, to worship, and to petition the government for the redress of grievances could not be vigorously protected from interference by the State unless a correlative freedom to engage in group effort toward those ends were not also guaranteed .... Consequently, we have long understood as implicit in the right to engage in activities protected by the First Amendment a corresponding right to associate with others in pursuit of a wide variety of political, social, economic, educational, religious, and cultural ends.

Roberts v. United States Jaycees, 468 U.S. 609, 622, 104 S.Ct. 3244, 82 L. Ed. 2d 462 (1984) (citation omitted). The due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment makes the First Amendment applicable to the states. *McIntyre v. Ohio Elections Comm'n*, 514 U.S. 334, 336 n. 1, 115 S.Ct. 1511, 131 L. Ed. 2d 426 (1995).

Protection of political speech is the very stuff of the First Amendment. "'[I]t can hardly be doubted that the constitutional guarantee [of the freedom of speech] has its fullest and most urgent application precisely to the conduct of campaigns for political office.'" *Buckley*, 424 U.S. at 15, 96 S.Ct. 612 (quoting *Monitor Patriot Co. v. Roy*, 401 U.S. 265, 272, 91 S.Ct. 621, 28 L. Ed. 2d 35 (1971)). That is because our constitutional form of government not only was borne of the great struggle to secure such freedoms as political speech, but also because such freedom helps assure the continuance of that constitutional government. "In a republic where the people are sovereign, the ability of the citizenry to make informed choices among candidates for office is essential, for the identities of those who are elected will inevitably shape the course that we follow as a nation." *Id.* at 14-15, 96 S.Ct. 612.

It cannot be disputed that Canon 5's restrictions on party identification, speech to political organizations, and solicitation of campaign funds directly limit judicial candidates' political speech. Its restrictions on attending political gatherings and seeking, accepting, or using a political organization's endorsement clearly limit a judicial candidate's right to associate with a group in the electorate that shares common political beliefs and aims.

C. The Strict Scrutiny Framework

Political speech—speech at the core of the First Amendment—is highly protected. Although not beyond restraint, strict scrutiny is applied to any regulation that would curtail it. *McIntyre*, 514 U.S. at 347, 115 S.Ct. 1511.

The strict scrutiny test requires the state to show that the law that burdens the protected right advances a compelling state interest and is narrowly tailored to serve that interest.[4] *Eu v. San Francisco County Democratic Cent. Comm.*, 489 U.S. 214, 222, 109 S.Ct. 1013, 103 L. Ed. 2d 271 (1989); *United States v. Playboy Entm't Group, Inc.*, 529 U.S. 803, 816, 120 S.Ct. 1878, 146 L. Ed. 2d 865 (2000) ("When the Government restricts speech, the Government bears the burden of proving the constitutionality of its actions."). Strict scrutiny is an exacting inquiry, such that "it is the rare case in which ... a law survives strict scrutiny." *Burson v. Freeman*, 504 U.S. 191, 211, 112 S.Ct. 1846, 119 L. Ed. 2d 5 (1992).

1. The Requirement of a Compelling State Interest

Precisely what constitutes a "compelling interest" is not easily defined. Attempts at definition generally use alter-

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[4] The strict scrutiny test contrasts with those inquiries used for speech not at the core of the First Amendment, "commensurate with [such speech's] subordinate position in the scale of First Amendment values," *Florida Bar v. Went For It, Inc.*, 515 U.S. 618, 623, 115 S.Ct. 2371, 132 L. Ed. 2d 541 (1995), or for regulations which only incidentally burden speech, *United States v. O'Brien*, 391 U.S. 367, 88 S.Ct. 1673, 20 L. Ed. 2d 672 (1968). So-called "intermediate scrutiny" is applied to restrictions of commercial speech. *See Central Hudson Gas & Elec. Corp. v. Public Serv. Comm'n*, 447 U.S. 557, 100 S.Ct. 2343, 65 L. Ed. 2d 341 (1980).

A regulation that restricts free speech only incidentally will be upheld, under the *O'Brien* test, if (1) it is within the constitutional power of Congress or the legislature to enact it, (2) it furthers an important or substantial governmental interest, (3) the regulation is unrelated to suppressing free expression, and (4) its restriction of speech is "no greater than is essential to the furtherance of that interest." *O'Brien*, 391 U.S. at 377, 88 S.Ct. 1673. And some "narrowly limited classes" of speech enjoy no First Amendment protection. *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire*, 315 U.S. 568, 571, 62 S.Ct. 766, 86 L.Ed. 1031 (1942). "These include the lewd and obscene, the profane, the libelous, and the insulting or 'fighting' words ...." *Id.* at 572, 62 S.Ct. 766.

native, equally superlative language: "interest[ ] of the highest order," "overriding state interest," "unusually important interest." *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205, 215, 92 S.Ct. 1526, 32 L. Ed. 2d 15 (1972); *McIntyre*, 514 U.S. at 347, 115 S.Ct. 1511 (1995); *Goldman v. Weinberger*, 475 U.S. 503, 530, 106 S.Ct. 1310, 89 L. Ed. 2d 478 (1986) (O'Connor, J., dissenting); *see* David Crump, *The Narrow Tailoring Issue in the Affirmative Action Cases: Reconsidering the Supreme Court's Approval in Gratz and Grutter of Race-Based Decision-Making by Individualized Discretion*, 56 Fla. L. Rev. 483, 498 (2004) ("The concept of a compelling governmental interest is deceptively self-evident. Its own words define it. It is an interest that is compelling, or extremely important, or of the 'first order.'"). And "[n]owhere in the text of the Constitution, or in its plain implications, is there any guide for determining what is a 'legitimate' state interest, [compelling or otherwise]." *Weber v. Aetna Cas. & Sur. Co.*, 406 U.S. 164, 181, 92 S.Ct. 1400, 31 L. Ed. 2d 768 (1972) (Rehnquist, J., dissenting). In addition, few of the Court's cases explain what makes a state interest "compelling." But some general guides can be deduced from what the Court has said. Some opinions have found an interest compelling based on policy grounds.[5] Others have found a basis in "the realization of constitutional guarantees." *See* Stephen E. Gottlieb, *Compelling Governmental Interests: An Essential But Unanalyzed Term in Constitutional Adjudication*, 68 B.U. L. Rev. 917, 932-37 (1988) (collecting cases).

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[5] Some of those policies have included apprehending highly mobile criminal suspects, deterring murder, avoiding the harms of illicit drugs, realizing consumer benefits in licensing requirements for professionals, and upholding the administration of justice. *See* Stephen E. Gottlieb, *Compelling Governmental Interests: An Essential But Unanalyzed Term in Constitutional Adjudication*, 68 B.U. L. Rev. 917, 935 n. 85 (1988) (collecting cases).

In general, strict scrutiny is best described as an end-and-means test that asks whether the state's purported interest is important enough to justify the restriction it has placed on the speech in question in pursuit of that interest. As one commentator has said, "the Court's treatment of governmental interests has become largely intuitive, a kind of 'know it when I see it' approach." *Id.* at 937. Such an analysis requires, first, a clear understanding of what the state's interest may be. "Clarity on this point is essential before we can decide whether [the purported interest] is indeed a compelling state interest . . . ." *White*, 536 U.S. at 775, 122 S.Ct. 2528.

The inquiry of whether the interest (the end) is "important enough"—that is, sufficiently compelling to abridge core constitutional rights—is informed by an examination of the regulation (the means) purportedly addressing that end. A clear indicator of the degree to which an interest is "compelling" is the tightness of the fit between the regulation and the purported interest: where the regulation fails to address significant influences that impact the purported interest, it usually flushes out the fact that the interest does not rise to the level of being "compelling." If an interest is *compelling* enough to justify abridging core constitutional rights, a state will enact regulations that substantially protect that interest from similarly significant threats. As expressed in *White*: "'[A] law cannot be regarded as protecting an interest of the highest order, and thus as justifying a restriction upon . . . speech, when it leaves appreciable damage to that supposedly vital interest unprohibited.'" *Id.* at 780, 122 S.Ct. 2528 (first alteration in original) (quoting *The Florida Star v. B.J.F.*, 491 U.S. 524, 541-42, 109 S.Ct. 2603, 105 L. Ed. 2d 443 (1989) (Scalia, J., concurring)).[6] *Accord City of Ladue v. Gilleo*, 512 U.S. 43,

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[6] The teachings of *Florida Star* make it clear that where a law is underinclusive to such a degree that the stated interest is not mean-

52-53, 114 S.Ct. 2038, 129 L. Ed. 2d 36 (1994) ("Exemptions from an otherwise legitimate regulation of a medium of speech . . . may diminish the credibility of the government's rationale for restricting speech in the first place."); *Florida Star*, 491 U.S. at 540, 109 S.Ct. 2603 ("[T]he facial underinclusiveness [of a speech regulation] raises serious doubts about whether [the state] is, in fact, serving . . . the significant interests [it articulates]."); *Carey v. Brown*, 447 U.S. 455, 100 S.Ct. 2286, 65 L. Ed. 2d 263 (1980) (finding purported interest in residential privacy not truly compelling where a picketing statute prohibited peaceful picketing in general, but not peaceful *labor* picketing, in residential neighborhoods); *Young v. Am. Mini Theatres, Inc.*, 427 U.S. 50, 67 n. 27, 96 S.Ct. 2440, 49 L. Ed. 2d 310 (1976) ("If some groups are exempted from a prohibition [purported to uphold a state interest], the rationale for regulation is fatally impeached.") (quotation omitted).

2. The Need for Narrow Tailoring

Once a state interest is found to be sufficiently compelling, the regulation addressing that interest must be narrowly tailored to serve that interest. *Eu*, 489 U.S. at 222, 109 S.Ct. 1013. As with the compelling interest determination, whether or not a regulation is narrowly tailored is evidenced by factors of relatedness between the regulation and the stated governmental interest. A narrowly tailored regulation is one that actually advances the state's interest (is necessary), does not sweep too broadly (is not overinclusive), does not leave significant influences bearing on the interest unregulated (is not underinclusive), and could be replaced by no other regulation that could advance the interest as well with less infringement of speech (is the least-restrictive alternative). *See id.* at 226, 228-29, 109

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ingfully protected, a state's claim that the interest is vital enough to abridge core constitutional rights is substantially attenuated. 491 U.S. at 541-42, 109 S.Ct. 2603 (Scalia, J., concurring).

S.Ct. 1013 (evaluating the degree to which the regulation in question advanced the stated interest at all); *Buckley*, 424 U.S. at 45-47, 96 S.Ct. 612 (same); *Simon & Schuster, Inc. v. Members of N.Y. State Crime Victims Bd.*, 502 U.S. 105, 122 n. *, 112 S.Ct. 501, 116 L. Ed. 2d 476 (1991) (stating that a regulation is not narrowly tailored if it is overinclusive); *Florida Star*, 491 U.S. at 540, 109 S.Ct. 2603 (holding that the underinclusiveness of a statute raises "serious doubts" about whether the statute actually serves the state's purported interest); *Rutan v. Republican Party of Ill.*, 497 U.S. 62, 74, 110 S.Ct. 2729, 111 L. Ed. 2d 52 (1990) (finding that a less restrictive means was available to advance the state's interest); *FEC v. Mass. Citizens for Life, Inc.*, 479 U.S. 238, 262, 107 S.Ct. 616, 93 L. Ed. 2d 539 (1986) (same); *Florida Star*, 491 U.S. at 538, 109 S.Ct. 2603 (same); Eugene Volokh, *Freedom of Speech, Permissible Tailoring and Transcending Strict Scrutiny*, 144 U. Pa. L. Rev. 2417 (collecting cases). In short, the seriousness with which the regulation of core political speech is viewed under the First Amendment requires such regulation to be as *precisely* tailored as possible.

D. Minnesota's Purported Compelling State Interest

In *Kelly*, Minnesota argued that Canon 5's restrictions on judicial candidate speech served a compelling state interest in maintaining the independence, and the impartiality, of the state's judiciary. Minnesota continues to argue that judicial independence, as applied to the issues in this case, springs from the need for impartial judges. Apparently, the idea is that a judge must be independent of and free from outside influences in order to remain impartial and to be so perceived. Thus, in *Kelly*, the panel majority understood the two notions, independence and impartiality, to be interchangeable,[7] as the Supreme Court

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[7] In their supplemental brief to the en banc court, Appellees attempt to resurrect from earlier arguments to the court a notion of

"independence," separate and distinct from "impartiality," that seeks to maintain real and apparent separation of the judiciary from political influences as a compelling state interest. The partisan-activities clause in particular, they argue, serves this interest by "ensur[ing] that the public views the judiciary as being independent of the strong political influences that pervade legislative and executive branch elections and continue to strongly influence legislative and executive branch decisions thereafter." Supplemental Br. on Remand of Defendants-Appellees at 10. This argument, however, falls prey to the same inherent underinclusiveness of Canon 5 that we discuss, *post* at 759-60 [33a-35a], with regard to its regulation of activities that concern only political parties.

We note that Appellees fret over the kind of influence political parties have in not only elections, but also governmental decisions made thereafter. This case, however, is not about what happens after an election. And in whatever measure this concern is addressed to political parties, it must equally apply to interest groups. By way of illustration using the legislative context Appellees mention, it is likely that the AFL-CIO concerns itself just as much as do the political parties with who chairs the legislative committees dealing with labor matters. And Minnesota's bar associations and trial lawyer associations almost certainly express as much interest as do the political parties in who leads the judiciary committees. While the record does not discuss this point, it is an unavoidable political reality. The essential point is that treating political parties differently than interest groups lies at the heart of the underinclusiveness problem in this case. Such underinclusiveness bedevils any claim that "independence" is a compelling state interest because consorting with politically active interest groups—certainly a source of equally worrisome potential for influence or the appearance of influence—is not regulated at all, as we discuss in more detail, *post* at 759-60 [33a-35a]. Thus, we proceed under Minnesota's original interchangeable use of "impartiality" and "independence."

The Minnesota Supreme Court's refusal to adopt the recommendations of its Advisory Committee discussed in footnote 3, *ante* at 745-46 [7a-8a], seems to have prompted the dissent to advance yet another previously unrecognized and unprecedented definition of judicial independence—a separation of powers theory. The Minnesota Supreme Court said,

> [T]he separation of powers inherent in the creation of three distinct branches of government, one of which is the judicial branch,

> in article III, section 1 of the Minnesota Constitution provides the constitutional underpinning for the *independence* of the Minnesota judiciary. As the executive and legislative branches are inextricably intertwined with partisan politics, maintenance of an independent judicial branch is reliant on the freedom of its officials from the control of partisan politics.

In re Amendment of the Code of Judicial Conduct, No. C4-85-697, slip op. at 4 (Minn. Sept. 14, 2004) (emphasis added).

Our opinion recognizes, citing *Gregory v. Ashcroft*, 501 U.S. 452, 111 S.Ct. 2395, 115 L. Ed. 2d 410 (1991), the right of a state to organize its government and to provide for separation of powers in its governmental structure. *Ante* at 747-48 [11a-12a]. We also recognize the Supremacy Clause of the Constitution and the requirement that state action may not violate the Constitution-including the First Amendment. *Id.*

There are, however, at least two other basic frailties to the dissent's arguments regarding Minnesota's interest in any separation of powers. First, neither the Supreme Court, nor any other court that we could find, has ever determined that a state's interest in maintaining a separation of powers is sufficiently compelling to abridge core First Amendment freedoms. While the dissent states that a separation of powers is a basic concept in Minnesota's constitution, the right to free political speech and association guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution is no less basic a concept. Indeed, First Amendment rights are even more fundamental. The right to free and open elections undergirds the framework of government established by any constitution, state or federal. Second, nothing in our opinion or the remedies sought by Appellants serve to further blur any existing lines between the judicial, legislative and executive branches of Minnesota state government. Rather, it is the actions of the Minnesota Supreme Court in adopting Canon 5 that have, in fact, taken the courts into what the dissent describes as the "political branches" of government and compromised any separation of powers framework established by Minnesota's constitution.

Though the Minnesota constitution allows the legislature to provide for disciplining judges, and the state legislature has given the Minnesota Supreme Court the authority to censure or remove judges and to promulgate rules of *conduct for lawyers*, through Canon 5, and without apparent constitutional or statutory authority, the Minnesota Supreme Court has stepped into the legislative arena in

promptly noted in *White*, 536 U.S. at 775 n. 6, 122 S.Ct. 2528. In *Kelly*, the panel majority analyzed the announce, partisan-activities, and solicitation clauses in light of impartiality as a compelling interest, but failed to define "impartiality." On appeal, the Supreme Court filled that void by fleshing out its meaning. Justice Scalia reasoned that impartiality in the judicial context has three potential meanings.

One possible meaning of "impartiality" is a "lack of preconception in favor of or against a particular *legal view*." *Id.* at 777, 122 S.Ct. 2528. Quickly discounting this uncommon use of the word, the Court said it could not be a compelling interest for a judge to "lack . . . predisposition regarding the relevant legal issues in a case" because such a requirement "has never been thought a necessary component of equal justice." *Id.* The Court reasoned, first, that it is "virtually impossible" to find a judge who lacks any "preconceptions about the law," and second, that it would not be desirable to have such a judge on the bench. *Id.* "Proof that a Justice's mind at the time he joined the Court was a complete *tabula rasa* in the area of constitutional adjudication would be evidence of lack of qualification, not lack of bias." *Id.* at 778, 122 S.Ct. 2528 (quotation omitted). We follow the Court's direction and likewise dismiss the idea that this meaning of impartiality could be a compelling state interest.

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an attempt to regulate the political climate of statewide elections, an authority seemingly granted only to the Minnesota legislature under its plenary powers. Minn. Const. art. 6, § 9; Minn. Stat. § 490.16; Minn. Stat. § 480.05. See Minn. Stat. §§ 200.01 *et seq.* (Minnesota legislature's enactments regarding statewide elections). Indeed, without any stated or readily discernible authority whatsoever, the Canon writes political parties out of statewide judicial elections and allows other political interests to fully participate in a totally unregulated manner.

A second possible meaning is a "lack of bias for or against either *party* to [a] proceeding." *Id.* at 775, 122 S.Ct. 2528. Calling this the traditional understanding of "impartiality" and the meaning used by Minnesota and amici in their due process arguments, the Court explained that this notion "guarantees a party that the judge who hears his case will apply the law to him in the same way he applies it to any other party." *Id.* at 776, 122 S.Ct. 2528. The Court implied, and we find it to be substantially evident, that *this* meaning of impartiality describes a state interest that is compelling. It can hardly be argued that seeking to uphold a constitutional protection, such as due process, is not per se a compelling state interest. *See, e.g., Regents of the Univ. of Cal. v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265, 311-315, 98 S.Ct. 2733, 57 L. Ed. 2d 750 (1978) (recognizing the First Amendment as a basis for a compelling state interest). And the rule laid down in *Tumey v. Ohio*, 273 U.S. 510, 47 S.Ct. 437, 71 L.Ed. 749 (1927), makes clear that the partiality of a judge as it relates to a party to a case violates due process protections: "[I]t certainly violates the Fourteenth Amendment, and deprives [a person] of due process of law, to subject his liberty or property to the judgment of a court the judge of which has a direct, personal, substantial, pecuniary interest in reaching a conclusion against him in his case." *Id.* at 523, 47 S.Ct. 437. In *Bracy v. Gramley*, 520 U.S. 899, 117 S.Ct. 1793, 138 L. Ed. 2d 97 (1997), the Court reiterated that "the floor established by the Due Process Clause clearly requires a fair trial in a fair tribunal, before a judge with no actual bias against the defendant or interest in the outcome of his particular case." *Id.* at 904-05, 117 S.Ct. 1793 (quotation and citation omitted). *See also Aetna Life Ins. Co. v. Lavoie*, 475 U.S. 813, 821-25, 106 S.Ct. 1580, 89 L. Ed. 2d 823 (1986) (citing *Tumey*); *Ward v. Monroeville*, 409 U.S. 57, 58-62, 93 S.Ct. 80, 34 L. Ed. 2d 267 (1972) (same); *Johnson v. Mississippi*, 403 U.S. 212, 215-16, 91 S.Ct. 1778, 29 L. Ed. 2d 423 (1971) (per curiam) (holding that due pro-

cess was violated where a judge presided in a case involving a party who had successfully sued him earlier. "Trial before 'an unbiased judge' is essential to due process."); *In re Murchison*, 349 U.S. 133, 137-39, 75 S.Ct. 623, 99 L.Ed. 942 (1955) (holding that due process was violated by a judge presiding over both the indictment, under a special "judge-grand jury" procedure in Michigan, and trial of a criminal defendant).

Being convinced that protecting litigants from biased judges is a compelling state interest, we turn to the "narrow tailoring" examination of the partisan-activities clause under this particular meaning of judicial impartiality. Because this meaning directs our attention to parties to the litigation rather than to ideas and issues, we analyze the regulation in this context before turning to other possible definitions of impartiality. We consider whether the partisan-activities clause actually addresses this compelling state interest and, if so, whether it is the least restrictive means of doing so.

In *White*, the Supreme Court found that the announce clause failed the narrow tailoring aspect of the strict scrutiny test, holding "[i]ndeed, the clause is barely tailored to serve that [lack of bias] interest *at all*, inasmuch as it does not restrict speech for or against particular *parties*, but rather speech for or against particular *issues*." *White*, 536 U.S. at 776, 122 S.Ct. 2528. Thus, the Court found that clause was not narrowly tailored because it failed to advance a compelling interest. The same is true for the partisan-activities clause.

3. Unbiased Judges and the Narrow Tailoring of the Partisan-Activities Clause

In one sense, the underlying rationale for the partisan-activities clause—that *associating with a particular group* will destroy a judge's impartiality—differs only in form from that which purportedly supports the announce

clause—that *expressing one's self on particular issues* will destroy a judge's impartiality. Canon 5, in relevant part, forbids a judicial candidate from identifying with a political organization, making speeches to a political organization, or accepting endorsements from or even attending meetings of a political organization, all of which are the quintessence of political associational activity. And beyond its importance in bringing about those rights textually protected by the First Amendment, association, as earlier noted, is itself an important form of speech, particularly in the political arena. *See, e.g., Boy Scouts of Am. v. Dale*, 530 U.S. 640, 655-56, 120 S.Ct. 2446, 147 L. Ed. 2d 554 (2000) (holding that the Boy Scouts had a First Amendment right to send a particular message based on the individuals it allowed to be associated with the organization as scoutmasters); *Eu*, 489 U.S. at 223, 109 S.Ct. 1013 ("[T]he First Amendment has its fullest and most urgent application to speech ... during a campaign for political office.") (quotation omitted). Indeed, Minnesota argues that a party label is nothing more than shorthand for the views a judicial candidate holds. Br. of Appellee The Hon. Charles Flinn, Jr. at 30. Inasmuch, then, as the partisan-activities clause seeks, at least in part, to keep judges from aligning with particular views on issues by keeping them from aligning with a particular political party, the clause is likewise "barely tailored" to affect any interest in impartiality toward parties. Thus, the Supreme Court's analysis of the announce clause under this meaning of "impartiality," to wit judicial bias, is squarely applicable to the partisan-activities clause.

> To be sure, when a case arises that turns on a legal issue on which the judge (as a candidate) had taken a particular stand, [be that through *announcing* or *aligning with* particular views,] the party taking the opposite stand is likely to lose. But not because of any bias against that party, or favoritism toward the other party. *Any* party taking that position is just as likely

> to lose. The judge is applying the law (as he sees it) evenhandedly.

White, 536 U.S. at 776-77, 122 S.Ct. 2528.

We recognize that the difference between the direct expression of views under the announce clause and expressing a viewpoint under the partisan-activities clause through association, is that the latter requires the aligning of one's self with other like-minded individuals—that is, the members of a political party.

Political parties are, of course, potential litigants, as they are in this case. Thus, in a case where a political party comes before a judge who has substantially associated himself or herself with that same party, a question could conceivably arise about the potential for bias in favor of that litigant. Yet even then, any credible claim of bias would have to flow from something more than the bare fact that the judge had associated with that political party. That is because the associational activities restricted by Canon 5 are, as we have pointed out, part-and-parcel of a candidate's speech for or against particular *issues* embraced by the political party. And such restrictions, we have also said, do not serve the due process rights of *parties*. In the case of a political party involved in a redistricting dispute, for example, the fact that the matter comes before a judge who is associated with the Republican or Democratic Party would not implicate concerns of bias for or against that party unless the judge were in some way involved in the case beyond simply having an "R" or "D," or "DFL" (denoting Minnesota's Democratic–Farmer–Labor Party) after his or her name. *See Minn. State Bar Ass'n v. Divorce Educ. Assocs.*, 300 Minn. 323, 219 N.W.2d 920, 922 (1974) (holding that in civil action brought by state bar association seeking injunction against individuals for unauthorized practice of law, membership in the same bar association would not in itself disqualify a judge from hearing the case on a theory the judge was "impliedly biased"). Thus, the partisan-

activities clause does not advance an interest in impartiality toward litigants in a case where, without more, it is a like-minded political party which is one of the litigants.

And in those political cases where a judge is more personally involved, such as where the redistricting case is a dispute about how to draw that judge's district, and even in those cases discussed above that merely involve a political party as a litigant, recusal is the least restrictive means of accomplishing the state's interest in impartiality articulated as a lack of bias for or against parties to the case. Through recusal, the same concerns of bias or the appearance of bias that Minnesota seeks to alleviate through the partisan-activities clause are thoroughly addressed without "burn-[ing] the house to roast the pig." *Butler v. Michigan*, 352 U.S. 380, 383, 77 S.Ct. 524, 1 L. Ed. 2d 412 (1957). Indeed, Canon 3 of the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct provides that a judge is to "disqualify himself or herself in a proceeding in which the judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned." 52 Minn. Stat. Ann., Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 3, subd. D(1). Section (a) of the statute in particular addresses Minnesota's goals, providing that a judge should recuse himself where "the judge has a personal bias or prejudice concerning a party." Concern about the mere *appearance* of bias is also addressed by recusal. *See In re Collection of Delinquent Real Prop. Taxes*, 530 N.W.2d 200, 206 (Minn. 1995) (holding that "[t]he controlling principle is that no judge . . . ought ever to [hear] the cause of any citizen, *even though he be entirely free from bias in fact*, if circumstances have arisen which give a bona fide appearance of bias to litigants.").

Therefore, the partisan-activities clause is barely tailored at all to serve any interest in unbiased judges, and, at least, is not the least-restrictive means of doing so. Accordingly, it is not narrowly tailored to any such interest and fails under strict scrutiny.

4. Impartiality Understood as "Openmindedness," and the Partisan-Activities Clause

The third possible meaning of "impartiality" articulated by the Supreme Court in *White*, and the one around which its analysis of the announce clause revolved, was "described as openmindedness." *White*, 536 U.S. at 778, 122 S.Ct. 2528. The Court explained,

> This quality in a judge demands, not that he have no preconceptions on legal issues, but that he be willing to consider views that oppose his preconceptions, and remain open to persuasion, when the issues arise in a pending case. This sort of impartiality seeks to guarantee each litigant, not an *equal* chance to win the legal points in the case, but at least *some* chance of doing so.

Id. The Court stopped short, however, of determining whether impartiality articulated as "openmindedness" was a compelling state interest because it found that, even if it were, the "woeful[ ] underinclusive[ness]" of the clause betrayed any intended purpose of upholding openmindedness. *Id.* at 780, 122 S.Ct. 2528.

We conclude that the partisan-activities clause is likewise "woefully underinclusive," calling into question its validity in at least two ways. First, it leads us to conclude, before even reaching a compelling interest inquiry, that like the announce clause, the partisan-activities clause was not adopted for the purpose of protecting judicial openmindedness. Second, under a compelling interest analysis, the clause's underinclusiveness causes us to doubt that the interest it purportedly serves is sufficiently compelling to abridge core First Amendment rights. We conclude that the underinclusiveness of the partisan-activities clause causes it to fail strict scrutiny.[5]

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[5] The dissent expands the Supreme Court's articulation of judicial "openmindedness" in *White* by importing an "anti-corruption" ele-

ment from *Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1, 96 S.Ct. 612, 46 L. Ed. 2d 659 (1976), *post* at 768-69 [51a]. But, *Buckley* is a case involving the regulation of the size, source and use of political contributions. It does not deal with the direct suppression of core political speech and association at issue in this case. And, there is nothing in the record that supports the interposition of the anti-corruption concerns advanced by the dissent.

The dissent also seeks to insert anti-corruption arguments discussed in *McConnell v. FEC*, 540 U.S. 93, 124 S.Ct. 619, 157 L. Ed. 2d 491 (2003), yet another political contributions case, into the candidate speech and association issues before us today. However, the Supreme Court, in *McConnell*, did not once cite *White* in the entirety of its 251-page opinion dealing with the corrupting influence of "soft" money and the political communications such money can buy. In addressing the legislation at issue in *McConnell*, the Supreme Court noted that the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 "regulates the use of soft money [as defined in the opinion] by political parties, office holders, and candidates." 540 U.S. at 132, 124 S.Ct. 619. The Court further states that the Act, "primarily prohibits corporations and labor unions from using general treasury funds for communications that are intended to, or have the effect of, influencing the outcome of federal elections." *Id.* Neither *Buckley* nor *McConnell* is a strict scrutiny case, though the dissent acknowledges that strict scrutiny applies in this case. *See post* at 73 [77a] n. 22. As stated in *McConnell*, "'there is no place [in this "soft money" case] for a strong presumption against constitutionality, of the sort often thought to accompany the words "strict scrutiny."'" 540 U.S. at 137, 124 S.Ct. 619 (quoting *Nixon v. Shrink Missouri Government PAC*, 528 U.S. 377, 400, 120 S.Ct. 897, 145 L. Ed. 2d 886 (2000)). In keeping with this, the Court applied a "less rigorous [than strict scrutiny] standard of review." *Id.* And *McConnell*'s one paragraph review of an underinclusiveness argument did not lay out any rule applicable to this case. The Court in *White* gave us the rule: "'[A] law cannot be regarded as protecting an interest of the *highest order*, and thus as justifying a restriction upon . . . speech, when it leaves appreciable damage to that *supposedly vital interest* unprohibited.'" 536 U.S. at 780, 122 S.Ct. 2528 (emphasis added) (first alteration in original) (quoting *Florida Star*, 491 U.S. at 541-42, 109 S.Ct. 2603 (Scalia, J., concurring)). In *Buckley*, the Court explained the use of two differing standards of review to governmentally imposed restrictions on election-related activities. The Court ana-

a. Underinclusiveness Belies Purported Purpose

Underinclusiveness in a regulation may reveal that motives entirely inconsistent with the stated interest actually lie behind its enactment. *See id.* at 779, 122 S.Ct. 2528 (noting that the underinclusiveness of the announce clause "is quite incompatible with the notion that the need for openmindedness ... lies behind the prohibition at issue here"); *City of Richmond v. J.A. Croson Co.*, 488 U.S. 469, 493, 109 S.Ct. 706, 102 L. Ed. 2d 854 (1989) (stating, in an equal protection case, "[i]ndeed, the purpose of strict scrutiny is to 'smoke out' illegitimate [purposes] .... The

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lyzed campaign contributions, and their reasonable limitations, under a "sufficiently important interest" standard that asked whether the limitations were "closely drawn to avoid unnecessary abridgement of [political] freedoms." 424 U.S. at 25, 96 S.Ct. 612. And where the Court actually discussed rights similar to those at issue in this case, it imposed "exacting scrutiny applicable to limitations on core First Amendment rights of political expression." *Id.* at 44-45, 96 S.Ct. 612. In fact, the Court stated clearly what we must keep in mind today:

> [A] candidate, no less than any other person, has a First Amendment right to engage in the discussion of public issues and vigorously and tirelessly to advocate his own election and the election of other candidates. Indeed, it is of particular importance that candidates have the unfettered opportunity to make their views known [and associate with like-minded persons] so that the electorate may intelligently evaluate the candidates' personal qualities and their positions on vital public issues before choosing among them on election day. Mr. Justice Brandeis' observation that in our country public discussion is a political duty, applies with special force to candidates for public office.... [T]he First Amendment simply cannot tolerate [a] restriction upon the freedom of a candidate to speak [or associate] without legislative limit on behalf of his own candidacy.

Id. at 52-54, 96 S.Ct. 612 (quotation omitted).

In sum, *Buckley* and *McConnell* do not support an underinclusive or incremented approach to "strict scrutiny" analysis and the teachings of these cases do not support the dissent's position to the contrary.

test also ensures that the means chosen 'fit' this compelling goal so closely that there is little or no possibility that the motive for the classification was [something inconsistent with the interest]."); *City of Cleburne v. Cleburne Living Ctr.*, 473 U.S. 432, 105 S.Ct. 3249, 87 L. Ed. 2d 313 (1985) (finding that the underinclusiveness of a zoning regulation betrayed the city's purported interests in, *inter alia*, not locating housing in a flood plain, not being legally responsible for the actions of its occupants, assuring adequate square footage per occupant, and lessening residential and street congestion); *First Nat'l Bank of Boston v. Bellotti*, 435 U.S. 765, 793, 98 S.Ct. 1407, 55 L. Ed. 2d 707 (1978) (finding that the underinclusiveness of a regulation "undermines the likelihood of a genuine state interest" in the purported goal). In *White*, the Court found that, "as a means of pursuing the objective of openmindedness ... the announce clause is so woefully underinclusive as to render belief in that purpose a challenge to the credulous." *White*, 536 U.S. at 780, 122 S.Ct. 2528. The underinclusiveness manifests itself in the inherently brief period of speech regulation during a political campaign relative to the many other instances in which a judicial candidate, especially an incumbent who is a candidate, has an opportunity to speak on disputed issues. The Court reasoned that if the purpose of the announce clause were truly to assure the openmindedness of judges, Minnesota would not try to address it through a regulation that restricted speech only during a campaign since candidates' views on contentious legal issues can be and are aired in the many speeches, class lectures, articles, books, or even court opinions given or authored before, during or after any campaign.

The same is true of the partisan-activities clause. The announce clause bars a judicial candidate from stating his views on disputed issues though "he may say the very same thing ... up until the very day before he declares himself a candidate." *Id.* at 779, 122 S.Ct. 2528. The partisan-acti-

vities clause bars a judicial candidate from associative activities with a political party during a campaign, though he may have been a life-long, active member of a political party (even accepting partisan endorsements for nonjudicial offices) up until the day he begins his run for a judicial seat. A regulation requiring a candidate to sweep under the rug his overt association with a political party for a few months during a judicial campaign, after a lifetime of commitment to that party, is similarly underinclusive in the purported pursuit of an interest in judicial openmindedness. The few months a candidate is ostensibly purged of his association with a political party can hardly be expected to suddenly open the mind of a candidate who has engaged in years of prior political activity. And, history indicates it will be rare that a judicial candidate for a seat on the Minnesota Supreme Court will not have had some prior, substantive, political association. In sum, restricting association with a political party only during a judicial campaign, in supposed pursuit of judicial openmindedness, renders the partisan-activities clause "so woefully underinclusive as to render belief in that purpose a challenge to the credulous." *Id.* at 780, 122 S.Ct. 2528.

As for the appearance of impartiality, the partisan-activities clause seems even less tailored than the announce clause to an interest in openmindedness. While partisan activity may be an indirect indicator of potential views on issues, an affirmative enunciation of views during an election campaign more directly communicates a candidate's beliefs. If, as the Supreme Court has declared, a candidate may *speak* about her views on disputed issues, what appearance of "impartiality" is protected by keeping a candidate from simply *associating* with a party that espouses the same or similar positions on the subjects about which she has spoken? Moreover, even if there were some system in which it would make sense to allow one but not the other in pursuit of the same goal, cabining a candidate

from a political party for the relatively short duration of a campaign would add nothing to an appearance of impartiality. Given this "woeful underinclusiveness" of the partisan-activities clause, it is apparent that advancing judicial openmindedness is not the purpose that "lies behind the prohibition at issue here."[9] *Id.* at 779, 122 S.Ct. 2528.

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[9] Rather, the fruits of Canon 5 appear to bear witness to its remarkably pro-incumbent character.

In 2004, of the three Minnesota Supreme Court seats up for election, only one was contested. (Originally, two seats were contested, but a challenger was disqualified.) Minnesota Lawyer, Judicial Elections 2004 (2004), at http://www.minnlawyer.com/elections/2004/uncontested.cfm (last visited Feb. 10, 2005). In the race that was contested, the incumbent enjoyed a nearly thirty-two percent margin in contributions from outside, non-loan sources. Candidate Filings, Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board (2004). The data from the Minnesota Court of Appeals is even more striking. Of the five Court of Appeals seats up for election, only two were contested. Minnesota Lawyer, Judicial Elections 2004 (2004), at http://www.minnlawyer.com/elections/2004/uncontested.cfm (last visited Feb. 10, 2005). In those two races, the incumbents were able to collect a combined total of $104,172.21 in contributions against a combined challengers' total of just $4,546.46-nearly twenty-three times as much. Candidate Filings, Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board (2004).

In 2000, Supreme Court incumbents raised a combined $505,120.66. Candidate Filings, Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board (2000). Only two of the challengers raised enough money to trigger disclosure. Their combined total was $23,582.67. *Id.*

Notably, donations from lawyers and law firm-related political funds account for a substantial portion of incumbents' re-election war chests. In one 2004 Court of Appeals race, such contributions accounted for over forty-three percent of the incumbent's total campaign funds. Candidate Filings, Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board (2004). In the 2004 Supreme Court race, they made up over half of the incumbent's funds. *Id.*

b. Underinclusiveness Betrays "Compelling" Claim

While it is not necessary for us to reach the question of whether judicial openmindedness as defined in *White* is sufficiently compelling to abridge core First Amendment rights, we note that the underinclusiveness of Canon 5's partisan activities clause clearly establishes that the answer would be no. Whether Minnesota asserts a compelling state interest in judicial openmindedness is substantially informed by the fit between the partisan-activities clause and the purported interest at stake. A clear indicator of the compelling nature of an interest is whether the state has bothered to enact a regulation that guards the interest from all significant threats.

We are guided on remand by the law enunciated in *White*, and the Court's words bear repeating: "[A] law cannot be regarded as protecting an interest of the highest order, and thus as justifying a restriction upon truthful speech, when it leaves appreciable damage to that supposedly vital interest unprohibited." *Id.* at 780, 122 S.Ct. 2528 (quotation omitted). By its own terms, Canon 5's restrictions on association with "political organizations" apply only to "association[s] of individuals under whose name a candidate files for partisan office"—political parties. 52 Minn. Stat. Ann., Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 5, subd. D. Yet, if mere association with an organization whose purpose is to advance political and social goals gives Minnesota sufficient grounds to restrict judicial candidates' activities, it makes little sense for the state to restrict such activity only with political parties. There are numerous other organizations whose purpose is to work at advancing any number of similar goals, often in a more determined way than a political party. Minnesota worries that a judicial candidate's consorting with a political party will damage that individual's impartiality or appearance of impartiality as a judge, apparently because she is seen as aligning

herself with that party's policies or procedural goals. But that would be no less so when a judge as a judicial candidate aligns herself with the constitutional, legislative, public policy and procedural beliefs of organizations such as the National Rifle Association (NRA), the National Organization for Women (NOW), the Christian Coalition, the NAACP, the AFL-CIO, or any number of other political interest groups. While Minnesota expresses doubt that the influence an interest group can have over a candidate is comparable to that of a political party, the record in this case refutes the premise.[10] Indeed, associating with an interest group, which by design is usually more narrowly focused on particular issues, conveys a much stronger message of alignment with particular political views and outcomes. A judicial candidate's stand, for example, on the importance of the right to keep and bear arms may not be obvious from her choice of political party. But, there can be little doubt about her views if she is a member of or endorsed by the NRA. Yet Canon 5 is completely devoid of any restriction on a judicial candidate attending or speaking to a gathering of an interest group; identifying herself as a member of an interest group; or seeking, accepting, or using an endorsement from an interest group. As a result, the partisan-activities clause unavoidably leaves appreciable damage to the supposedly vital interest of judicial

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[10] The record informs us of activity on the part of the League of Women Voters to publish a voter's guide regarding candidates and their views; the Minnesota Family Council urging Minnesotans to join the fight to defend traditional Judeo-Christian values; *Lavender Magazine*, which describes its readership as including the politically active gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgender community, providing a voter's guide; the Minnesota Women Lawyers, whose mission is to pursue equal participation for women in the legal profession, seeking to endorse judicial candidates for office; People for Responsible Government, a group interested in the accountability of government to the people, holding a forum on judicial reform issues; and the state and local bar associations.

openmindedness unprohibited, and thus Minnesota's argument that it protects an interest of the highest order fails.[11]

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[11] The dissent appears to assert a newly minted state interest described as "protecting the judicial process from extraneous coercion." *Post* at 767 [47a]. Although the dissent claims that such interest "has been recognized as compelling," *id.*, it cites no precedent for the proposition and we have found none. Neither does the dissent flesh out the nature and source of this purported "coercion." While it argues that political parties are the source of such coercion, we find no evidence in the record to support that. And the dissent does not include political interest groups in its concern about coercion, notwithstanding such groups' many well documented forays into judicial selection matters.

While the dissent is concerned about political party involvement in judicial selection, state law itself inculcates partisan interests into the process. For example, when a justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court resigns shortly before the end of a term of office, a practice widely followed in Minnesota for many years, the governor, who is selected on a partisan ballot and is usually considered the current head of his or her party, selects and appoints a successor who is almost always a member of the governor's own party. Minn. Const. art. 6, § 8. Published history shows that these patronage-propounded selectees are often, if not always, former partisan office holders or party activists. The political appointee then serves a term that lasts until the next general election occurring more than one year after the appointment. *Id.* Through this device, the gubernatorial designee is able to stand for election on the non-partisan judicial ballot ostensibly as an incumbent office holder, fully protected by Canon 5 from the rigors of a constitutionally sound political exercise. Indeed, all but one of the present members of the high court and twenty-three of the last twenty-five Supreme Court Justices ascended to the Minnesota bench in this manner. Minnesota State Law Library Docket Series: Chronological List of Justices and Judges of the Minnesota Appellate Courts (2005), at http://www.lawlibrary.state.mn.us/judges.htm (last visited June 6, 2005). This partisan involvement in judicial selection, fully sanctioned by the Minnesota constitution, is direct and personal and filtered not at all by the ballot box.

c. Underinclusiveness Not Indicative of a Legitimate Policy Choice

The panel majority in *Kelly* did not find the underinclusiveness of the partisan-activities clause troublesome. It viewed it as a legitimate policy choice: "when underinclusiveness results from a choice to address a greater threat before a lesser, it does not run afoul of the First Amendment." *Kelly*, 247 F.3d at 872. Association with political parties, goes the argument, is a greater threat to judicial openmindedness than association with interest groups because political parties have more power "to hold a candidate in thrall."[12] *Id.* at 876. But to determine whether Minnesota has shown that association with political parties poses a greater menace to judicial openmindedness than association with other political interest groups, it is necessary to do at least some analysis of the two supposed threats. While the opinion in Kelly purports to examine the "threat" posed by political parties, it contains no discussion of any comparable danger advanced by association with special interest groups, despite ample record evidence that

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[12] The panel majority in *Kelly* reasoned that treating political parties differently from interest groups is further justified given political parties' "powerful machinery," including a large membership, to enforce adherence to their views. 247 F.3d at 876. The majority also concluded different treatment was called for "because political parties have comprehensive platforms," and thus "obligation to a party has a great likelihood of compromising a judge's independence on a wide array of issues." *Id.* Yet, this does not account for the regulation of those Minnesota political parties that have a more limited membership, or that limit their focus to only a few issues, including the Constitution Party, the Natural Law Party, and the Green Party. Canon 5's oversight of these parties calls into question the asserted "powerful machinery" and "comprehensive platform" rationales for regulating political parties but not interest groups, and exposes the fact that, arbitrarily, it is the mere designation of a group as a "political party" that invokes Canon 5's regulation.

suggests the influence of these special groups is at least as great as any posed by political parties.[13]

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[13] For instance, in testimony before the Minnesota Supreme Court in 1997 regarding proposed amendments to Canon 5, the Honorable Gary J. Meyer, Chief Judge of Minnesota's Tenth Judicial District, testified that his assignment area passed a resolution supporting amending section 5D—the definition of "political organization"—to "include not just political parties but all organizations, . . . though not individuals, which endorse candidates for elected office." Hearing on the Amendment to Canon 5 of the Code of Judicial Conduct, C7-81-300, Tr. at 36 (Minn. Nov. 19, 1997). Judge Meyer pointed out that, regarding Minnesota's purported concern about keeping partisanship out of judicial campaigns, "you do not take partisan politics out of a judicial election simply by excluding support from political parties." *Id.* His testimony highlighted the same concerns we raise here today:

> The definition of political organization in Paragraph D effectively . . . limits the term [to] "political parties." It [thereby] allows a candidate for the judiciary to seek and use the endorsements of such special interest groups as the National Rifle Association, the Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life, the National Organization for Women, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, or any labor union. Clearly, organizations such as these can and frequently do support and oppose candidates for political office. . . . It appears that the proposed changes to Canon 5 are an attempt to strip political affiliation from judicial elections, but at the same time, they allow and perhaps encourage candidates to adopt issue group affiliation. This doesn't take party politics out of the judicial election. . . . [I]f you're going to exclude one, why not exclude them all? It seems to me that it doesn't make a . . . judicial election any less political. . . . I question why it's appropriate to deny a judge the ability to have literature distributed with his or her political party while at the same time allow an opponent to seek MCCL [Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life] support and distribution of their literature endorsing the opponent in church parking lots on the Sunday before the election. Is it fair for a judge who supported a no guns peace policy within his or her political party to not be able to seek the help of that party against an opponent who seeks and uses the NRA mailing list for an endorsement? Why should a judicial candidate be able to solicit labor union support and eventually its sam-

Minnesota has simply not met its heavy burden of showing that association with a political party is so much greater a threat than similar association with interest groups, at least with evidence sufficient for the drawing of a constitutionally valid line between them. As a result, cases granting some degree of deference to legislatures who seek to attack one form of a problem before addressing another form are not applicable here. *See Erznoznik v. City of Jacksonville*, 422 U.S. 205, 95 S.Ct. 2268, 45 L. Ed. 2d 125 (1975) (relying on *Williamson v. Lee Optical Inc.*, 348 U.S. 483, 75 S.Ct. 461, 99 L.Ed. 563 (1955)).

To the contrary "the notion that a regulation of speech may be impermissibly *underinclusive* is firmly grounded in basic First Amendment principles." *Ladue*, 512 U.S. at 51, 114 S.Ct. 2038. While the Court in *Erznoznik* stated in dictum that underinclusive classifications may be upheld, "on the sound theory that a legislature may deal with one part of a problem without addressing all of it," it was quick to add that "[t]his presumption of statutory validity, however, ... has less force when a classification turns on the subject matter of expression." *Erznoznik*, 422 U.S. at 215, 95 S.Ct. 2268. Just as the Court did in *Erznoznik*, we reject the argument that the underinclusive regulation is valid. "'[A]bove all else, the First Amendment means that government has no power to restrict expression because of its message, its ideas, its subject matter, or its content.'" *Id.* (quoting *Police Dep't of Chicago v. Mosley*, 408 U.S. 92, 95, 92 S.Ct. 2286, 33 L. Ed. 2d 212 (1972)). As we have noted,

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ple ballot, but not ... the support of the political party for which he or she worked for many years? Is it appropriate for a judicial candidate to speak and appear at a MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, function but not [at] a political party [function]? Why should these special interest endorsements and activity be protected as constitutionally guaranteed free speech and assembly but political party endorsements and activity not be so protected[?]

Id. at 36-38, 40-41.

political association is speech in and of itself. It allows a person to convey a message about some of his or her basic beliefs through such associations. *See, e.g., Boy Scouts of Am.*, 530 U.S. at 655-56, 120 S.Ct. 2446. Even if we were to believe that the partisan-activities clause regulates political parties and not interest groups because political parties somehow pose a greater "threat" by having a louder and more comprehensive voice, such a distinction would still turn, at least in part, on the content of the message each seeks to convey. Under such a rationale, it is the subject matter of the messages that is at stake—with political parties usually, but not always, emitting a variety of propositions and interest groups often advancing a more narrowly focused agenda. Such line-drawing based on the subject matter of expression is what the Court in *Erznoznik* considered suspect. *Erznoznik*, particularly, discredits any argument that the Minnesota Supreme Court is justified in dealing with one part of the perceived subject matter problem, and not all of it.

In *Kelly*, the majority relied upon *Lee Optical* for the proposition that a legislature "may take one step at a time, addressing itself to the phase of the problem which seems most acute to the legislative mind." 348 U.S. at 489, 75 S.Ct. 461. But *Lee Optical* turned on a determination that the "Equal Protection Clause goes no further than [prohibiting] invidious discrimination." *Id.* Thus, *Lee Optical*'s underinclusiveness dealt with a matter of degree in a regulation that did not invoke strict scrutiny because the regulation did not implicate a fundamental right or a suspect classification. But underinclusiveness in this free speech case questions the very premise that Minnesota is seeking to address a compelling interest. Quite apart from addressing itself to any "phase" of a particular problem, Minnesota seeks to regulate different sources of the same so-called "problem" based exclusively on whether or not groups are registered as Minnesota political parties. In

Burson, the Court held that Tennessee's failure to restrict charitable and commercial solicitation or exit polling, in addition to campaigning, within 100 feet of polling places did not render the statute "fatally underinclusive" because the evidence in the case did not show that such charitable and commercial solicitation influenced the state's interest of preventing fraud at polling places. 504 U.S. at 207, 112 S.Ct. 1846. In stating that "[s]tates adopt laws to address the problems that confront them" and "[t]he First Amendment does not require States to regulate for problems that do not exist," the Court concluded that there was "simply no evidence that political candidates have used other forms of solicitation or exit polling to commit . . . electoral abuses." *Id.* By contrast, as discussed above, the evidence in this case, and common sense, show that association with political interest groups poses the same threat, if any real threat actually exists at all, to judicial openmindedness as that posed by political parties. This, coupled with the Court's view in *White* that "[a] law cannot be regarded as protecting an interest of the highest order, and thus as justifying a restriction upon truthful speech, when it leaves appreciable damage to that supposedly vital interest unprohibited," compels us to find that the underinclusiveness of the partisan-activities clause is not indicative of a legitimate policy choice on the part of Minnesota. *White*, 536 U.S. at 780, 122 S.Ct. 2528 (quotation omitted).[11]

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[11] We also do not "doom," by setting the bar too high, all future attempts by Minnesota to adopt judicial election regulations that will pass strict scrutiny. *Post* at 79 [85a]. The dissent says that we should apply strict scrutiny with deference to states that choose to address only some threats, and that if we do not, we "occupy the enviable position of not being required to say in advance what line would be permissible," but can simply veto every attempt made at regulation. We respectfully believe this incorrectly characterizes our position and suggests a course of action that no Article III court ought to entertain.

5. The Solicitation Clause

We now turn to an analysis of portions of the solicitation clause. The solicitation clause bars judicial candidates from personally soliciting individuals or even large gatherings for campaign contributions. "In effect, candidates are completely chilled from speaking to potential contributors and endorsers about their potential contributions and endorsements." *Weaver v. Bonner*, 309 F.3d 1312, 1322 (11th Cir. 2002). And as the majority conceded in *Kelly*, such restriction depends wholly upon the subject matter of the speech for its invocation. 247 F.3d at 863. Judicial candidates are not barred from personally requesting funds for any purpose other than when it is "related to a political campaign." *Burson*, 504 U.S. at 197, 112 S.Ct. 1846. Restricting speech

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First, we approach this case with the posture the Supreme Court has long prescribed for this inquiry: "it is the rare case in which . . . a law survives strict scrutiny." *Burson*, 504 U.S. at 211, 112 S.Ct. 1846. A law subject to strict scrutiny because it regulates speech based on its content is *presumptively* invalid. *Ashcroft v. ACLU*, 542 U.S. 656, 124 S.Ct. 2783, 2788, 159 L. Ed. 2d 690 (2004). And we do not carte-blanche veto Minnesota's regulations. The court's opinion today meticulously analyzes, in light of *White*, the relevant portions of the partisan-activities and solicitation clauses, as strict scrutiny demands.

Second, we deal, as we should, only with the regulations presented to us today to determine whether the lines drawn by them pass the rigors of strict scrutiny. In making this determination, we cannot overlook the fact that Minnesota unevenly regulates various political groups that have the potential for the same electoral impact that the state cites as justification for its regulations. In carefully applying Supreme Court precedent, we are not in any way exercising a "veto." We simply apply strict scrutiny as required.

Finally, we would flirt with rendering an advisory opinion, or stepping into the legislative arena ourselves, were we to tell Minnesota how to structure its election laws. If the state is unable to strike a balance with its regulations that satisfies strict scrutiny, that does not indicate a failing of the inquiry; rather, it quite likely indicates that the state has impermissibly trod where it may not.

based on its subject matter triggers the same strict scrutiny as does restricting core political speech. "'The First Amendment's hostility to content-based regulation extends not only to restrictions on particular viewpoints, but also to prohibition of public discussion of an entire [subject].'" *Carey*, 447 U.S. at 462, n. 6, 100 S.Ct. 2286 (quoting *Consol. Edison Co. of N.Y., Inc. v. Pub. Serv. Comm'n*, 447 U.S. 530, 537, 100 S.Ct. 2326, 65 L. Ed. 2d 319 (1980)).

Moreover, the very nature of the speech that the solicitation clause affects invokes strict scrutiny. This is because the clause applies to requests for funds to be used in promoting a political message. It bears repeating that "'[i]t can hardly be doubted that the constitutional guarantee [of the freedom of speech] has its fullest and most urgent application precisely to the conduct of campaigns for political office.'" *Buckley*, 424 U.S. at 15, 96 S.Ct. 612 (quoting *Monitor Patriot Co. v. Roy*, 401 U.S. 265, 272, 91 S.Ct. 621, 28 L. Ed. 2d 35 (1971)). And promoting a political message requires the expenditure of funds.

> [V]irtually every means of communicating ideas in today's mass society requires the expenditure of money. The distribution of the humblest handbill or leaflet entails printing, paper, and circulation costs. Speeches and rallies generally necessitate hiring a hall and publicizing the event. The electorate's increasing dependence on television, radio, and other mass media for news and information has made these expensive modes of communication indispensable instruments of effective political speech.

Id. at 19, 96 S.Ct. 612. As Justice O'Connor stated in her *White* concurrence, "[u]nless the pool of judicial candidates is limited to those wealthy enough to independently fund their campaigns, a limitation unrelated to judicial skill, the cost of campaigning requires judicial candidates to engage in fundraising." 536 U.S. at 789-90, 122 S.Ct. 2528 (O'Connor, J., concurring). Insofar as the solicitation clause re-

stricts the amount of funds a judicial candidate is able to expend on his or her political message, the regulation is of the same caliber as that struck down in *Buckley*.

Since strict scrutiny is clearly invoked, the solicitation clause must also be narrowly tailored to serve a compelling state interest. Minnesota asserts that keeping judicial candidates from personally soliciting campaign funds serves its interest in an impartial judiciary by preventing any undue influence flowing from financial support. We must determine whether the regulation actually advances an interest in non-biased or openminded judges.[15] Appellants challenge only the fact that they cannot solicit contributions from large groups and cannot, through their campaign committees, transmit solicitation messages above their personal signatures. They do not challenge the campaign committee system that Canon 5 provides under which candidates may establish committees that may solicit campaign funds on behalf of the candidate. "Such committees shall not disclose

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[15] The dissent cites polls from other states that show concern on the part of those surveyed that lawyers' and plaintiffs' campaign contributions to judicial candidates influence the decisions of judges. *Post* at 774-75 [62a-63a]. The dissent asserts that political parties embody similar threats of "outside influence" on the judiciary. But these poll numbers provide clear evidence that the perception of influence is of a far different kind, one that is not regulated by Canon 5.

While Canon 5 severs judicial candidates from like-minded voters during an election, it expressly allows lawyers, law firms and other interest groups to donate money to their campaigns. In the 2004 Minnesota Supreme Court election, approximately thirty-two percent of all campaign contributions came from law firm political funds and lawyers. Candidate Filings, Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board (2004). And in the only contested race, over ninety-seven percent of such contributions went to the incumbent. *Id.* We need not speculate about the impact these lawyer contributions have on the appearance of the judiciary's integrity—the poll numbers noted by the dissent leave little question.

to the candidate the identity of campaign contributors nor shall the committee disclose to the candidate the identity of those who were solicited for contribution or stated public support and refused such solicitation." 52 Minn. Stat. Ann., Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 5, subd. B(2).

a. Unbiased Judges and the Narrow Tailoring of the Solicitation Clause

We first consider whether the solicitation clause serves an interest in impartiality articulated as a lack of bias for or against a party to a case. Keeping candidates, who may be elected judges, from directly soliciting money from individuals who may come before them certainly addresses a compelling state interest in impartiality as to parties to a particular case. It seems unlikely, however, that a judicial candidate, if elected, would be a "judge [who] has a direct, personal, substantial, pecuniary interest in reaching a conclusion [for or] against [a litigant in a case]," *Tumey*, 273 U.S. at 523, based on whether that litigant had contributed to the judge's campaign. That is because Canon 5 provides specifically that all contributions are to be made to the candidate's *committee*, and the committee "shall not" disclose to the candidate those who either contributed or rebuffed a solicitation. 52 Minn. Stat. Ann., Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 5, subd. B(2). Thus, just as was true with the announce clause and its fit with an interest in unbiased judges, the contested portions of the solicitation clause are barely tailored at all to serve that end. An actual or mechanical reproduction of a candidate's signature on a contribution letter will not magically endow him or her with a power to divine, first, to whom that letter was sent, and second, whether that person contributed to the campaign or balked at the request.[16] In the same vein, a candidate would

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[16] While it is argued that the addition of a candidate's personal signature increases the chances that a candidate will discover the source of contributions because some contributors will send dona-

be even less able to trace the source of funds contributed in response to a request transmitted to large assemblies of voters. So, the solicitation clause's proscriptions against a candidate personally signing a solicitation letter or making a blanket solicitation to a large group, does not advance any interest in impartiality articulated as a lack of bias for or against a party to a case.

b. Openminded Judges and the Narrow Tailoring of the Solicitation Clause

We next consider whether the solicitation clause as applied by Minnesota serves an interest in impartiality articulated as "openmindedness." Put another way, would allowing a judicial candidate to personally sign outgoing solicitation letters, or to ask a large audience to support

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tions directly to the candidate, such a contention is pure conjecture. Though the candidate's personal signature may appear at the foot of the letter, certainly the address included in the letter to which donations are to be sent will be that of the candidate's campaign committee, if Canon 5 is followed. It would take special effort on the part of a contributor to find the personal or business address of a candidate in order to send a direct contribution. But that would be possible even if the candidate did not personally sign the letter. Presumably, any contribution letter will, and should, include the name of the candidate for whom a donation is sought. With that information, the same effort could be expended by a contributor bent on sending a donation directly to the candidate. Adding a candidate's personal or facsimile signature does not alter the potential that a devoted contributor with a little time on his hands might short-circuit Canon 5's interposition of the campaign committee. At any rate, any number of other—more likely—scenarios allowing a candidate to stumble onto the names of contributors are possible, particularly since very specific information about campaign contributions are publicly available, notably on the Internet, from the Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board. A chance meeting with a supporter who has made a contribution or viewed such information could just as easily result in the supporter commenting to the candidate about contributors to the campaign. This is, at least, no more conjecture than assuming that a contributor will send a contribution directly to a candidate as a result of the candidate's signature on the letter.

particular views through their financial contributions, in some way damage that judge's "willing [ness] to consider views that oppose his preconceptions, and remain open to persuasion, when the issues arise in a pending case"? *White*, 536 U.S. at 778, 122 S.Ct. 2528. We think not. Given that Canon 5 prevents a candidate from knowing the identity of contributors or even non-contributors, to believe so would be a "challenge to the credulous." *Id.* at 780, 122 S.Ct. 2528. Thus, Minnesota's solicitation clause seems barely tailored to in any way affect the openmindedness of a judge. Accordingly, the solicitation clause, as applied by Minnesota, cannot pass strict scrutiny when applied to a state interest in impartiality articulated as openmindedness.

III. CONCLUSION

In *White*, the Supreme Court invalidated the announce clause and remanded the case to this court. Upon further consideration of the partisan-activities and solicitation clauses in light of *White*, we hold that they likewise do not survive strict scrutiny and thus violate the First Amendment. We therefore reverse the district court, and remand with instructions to enter summary judgment for Appellants.

LOKEN, Chief Judge, concurring in part and dissenting in part.

I concur in Parts I, II.B, II.C, II.D.1, and II.D.2 of the opinion of the court. I concur in Part IV of Judge John R. Gibson's dissent and therefore dissent from the holding that Appellants are entitled to summary judgment invalidating the solicitation clauses. I otherwise concur in the judgment of the court.

COLLOTON, Circuit Judge, with whom GRUENDER and BENTON, Circuit Judges, join, concurring in part and concurring in the judgment.

I concur in Parts I, II.B, II.C introduction, II.C.2, II.D introductory text, II.D.1, II.D.2.a, II.D.2.c, II.D.3, and III of the opinion of the court, and in the judgment of the court.

JOHN R. GIBSON, Circuit Judge, with whom McMILLIAN and MURPHY, Circuit Judges, join, dissenting.

The Court today strikes down the partisan activities clauses and the solicitation restriction as a matter of law, by summary judgment, ruling that the interests at stake are not compelling and that the clauses of Canon 5 are either too broad, or not broad enough, to justify their own existence. Preserving the integrity of a state's courts and those courts' reputation for integrity is an interest that lies at the very heart of a state's ability to provide an effective government for its people. The word "compelling" is hardly vivid enough to convey its importance. The questions of whether that interest is threatened by partisan judicial election campaigns and personal solicitation of campaign contributions, and whether the measures Minnesota has adopted were crafted to address only the most virulent threats to that interest, are in part factual questions, which we should not decide on summary judgment. Finally, the Court today adopts an approach to strict scrutiny that would deny the states the ability to defend their compelling interests, no matter how urgent the threat. For these reasons, I respectfully dissent.

I.

The partisan activities clauses and the solicitation restriction each serve an interest that is and has been recognized as compelling-protecting the judicial process from extraneous coercion.

A.

In the district court, the Minnesota Boards argued that the state's compelling interest was in protecting judicial independence and impartiality, concepts that were not fur-

ther defined, perhaps because the Boards considered their meaning apparent. When the announce clause was before the Supreme Court, the opinion authored by Justice Scalia determined that further definition and analysis were essential in order to determine whether impartiality was a compelling state interest and whether the announce clause was narrowly tailored to serve that interest. *Republican Party of Minn. v. White*, 536 U.S. 765, 775, 122 S.Ct. 2528, 153 L. Ed. 2d 694 (2002). Justice Scalia divined three possible meanings for judicial "impartiality." The last meaning was "open-mindedness." *Id.* at 778, 122 S.Ct. 2528.

> This quality in a judge demands, not that he have no preconceptions on legal issues, but that he be willing to consider views that oppose his preconceptions, and remain open to persuasion, when the issues arise in a pending case. This sort of impartiality seeks to guarantee each litigant, not an *equal* chance to win the legal points in the case, but at least *some* chance of doing so.

Id. (emphasis in original). Because the announce clause was "woefully underinclusive" to serve any interest in judicial open-mindedness, Justice Scalia concluded that Minnesota had not adopted the announce clause in order to further such an interest; he therefore found it unnecessary to consider whether preserving "judicial open-mindedness" was a compelling state interest. *Id.* at 778-80, 122 S.Ct. 2528. Since *White*, the New York Court of Appeals has held that judicial open-mindedness is a compelling interest because "it ensures that each litigant appearing in court has a genuine—as opposed to illusory—opportunity to be heard." *In re Watson*, 100 N.Y.2d 290, 763 N.Y.S.2d 219, 794 N.E.2d 1, 7 (2003).

After *White*, by order of December 9, 2003, the Minnesota Supreme Court created an Advisory Committee to review its Canons 3 and 5 in light of *White*. *In re Amendment of the Code of Judicial Conduct*, No. C4-85-697, Slip op. at 1

(Minn. Sept. 14, 2004) (recounting history). The Committee received public comment and held a hearing. Report of the Advisory Committee to Review the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct and the Rules of the Board on Judicial Standards, Acknowledgements (April 15, 2004). Following the Committee's report, the Minnesota Supreme Court held its own hearing and received public comment. *In re Amendment of the Code of Judicial Conduct*, No. C4-85-697, Slip op. at 1 (Minn. Sept. 14, 2004). In September 2004, the Minnesota Supreme Court amended Canon 5 to add a definition of impartiality that explicitly includes open-mindedness:

> "Impartiality" or "impartial" denotes absence of bias or prejudice in favor of, or against, particular parties or classes of parties, as well as maintaining an open mind in considering issues that may come before the judge.

Canon 5E (as amended Sept. 14, 2004).

The Court today discusses open-mindedness as if the concern were to protect judicial candidates from experiences that would affect their subjective frame of mind. Thus, the Court holds that the state's interest cannot be served by measures that only limit the candidate's conduct during a campaign, not before: "The few months a candidate is ostensibly purged of his association with a political party can hardly be expected to suddenly open the mind of a candidate who has engaged in years of prior political activity." Op. at 757-58 [31a].

This answers the easy question but ignores the hard one. The threat to open-mindedness at which the partisan activities and solicitation clauses aim comes not from within the candidates, but from without and consists of the candidates placing themselves in debt to powerful and wide-reaching political organizations that can make or break them in each election. This is a fundamental distinction

between the partisan activities and solicitation clauses, on the one hand, and the announce clause, which was at issue in *White*. A central tenet of Justice Scalia's opinion in *White* was that the announce clause regulated a candidate's relation to issues, not people. *See* 536 U.S. at 776, 122 S.Ct. 2528 (The announce clause "does not restrict speech for or against particular *parties*, but rather speech for or against particular *issues*.").[17] The partisan activities and solicitation clauses regulate how certain speech affects a judicial candidate's relations with people, and organizations of people, not the candidate's relations with issues.

Our Court's concern with temporal underinclusiveness, Op. at 757-58 [31a], is largely a result of its failure to address the threat to open-mindedness from external pressure. The threat to open-mindedness results from allowing the candidates to incur obligations during a campaign that can affect their performance in office. Once a person becomes a candidate, the significance of his relations with the party changes radically, as the party becomes empowered to play the role of judge-maker. Any regulation that governed relations with the party before a person had become a candidate would be overly broad, but a regulation that focuses on the campaign period is tailored to address the threat in the time-frame in which the threat is most overt.

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[17] One of the chief differences between the opinion of the Court in *White* and the dissents was that the dissents considered the announce clause to affect the candidate's relationship with supporters in a significant way, whereas Justice Scalia did not. *Compare* 536 U.S. at 782, 122 S.Ct. 2528 (Scalia, J.) (judge who changes position stated in campaign no more vulnerable than any other judge who rules in a way disliked by the public) *with id.* at 800, 122 S.Ct. 2528 (Stevens, J., dissenting) (candidate who announces views is telling electorate, "Vote for me because I believe X and I will judge cases accordingly.") *and id.* at 816, 122 S.Ct. 2528 (Ginsburg, J., dissenting) (judge who fails to honor campaign promises may be thought to have betrayed supporters).

Similarly, the Court today dismisses the danger of bias from partisan involvement in judicial campaigns even in cases in which the political parties are litigants, on the ground that the only relevant link between the judge and the party is that both have espoused similar positions on "particular *issues* embraced by the political party." Op. at 755 [25a]. To the contrary, once the partisan activities clauses are gone, having espoused similar positions on issues will be the least significant aspect of the party's relationship to its successful candidate; the truly significant point is that the candidate may owe his or her accession to the bench to the litigant before the bar and may be similarly dependent on that litigant for any hope of success in future elections. Once the partisan activities clauses are gone, one may expect that party involvement will become the norm, so that recusal would be pointless, since all judges would be similarly compromised.

B.

"Open-mindedness," in Justice Scalia's terminology, is in reality simply a facet of the anti-corruption interest that was recognized in *Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1, 26-27, 96 S.Ct. 612, 46 L. Ed. 2d 659 (1976), and subsequent campaign finance cases. *See FEC v. Nat'l Conservative PAC*, 470 U.S. 480, 496-97, 105 S.Ct. 1459, 84 L. Ed. 2d 455 (1985) (referring to "preventing corruption or the appearance of corruption" as "legitimate and compelling government interests"); *FEC v. Nat'l Right to Work Comm.*, 459 U.S. 197, 208, 103 S.Ct. 552, 74 L. Ed. 2d 364 (1982) (importance of avoiding corruption has never been doubted and is linked to "the integrity of our electoral process" and the responsibility of the citizen for the successful functioning of that process). Allowing those responsible for the various branches of government to contract obligations inconsistent with the discharge of their public duties threatens the republic created by the Constitution; a republic designed so that it could not protect itself from such a threat would

contain the seeds of its own destruction. *See Nixon v. Shrink Missouri Gov't PAC*, 528 U.S. 377, 390, 120 S.Ct. 897, 145 L. Ed. 2d 886 (2000) ("Leave the perception of impropriety unanswered, and the cynical assumption that large donors call the tune could jeopardize the willingness of voters to take part in democratic governance.").

Corruption is a sufficiently serious threat to our institutions that the government may (1) seek to prevent it before it happens and (2) act against it in intermediate forms that are more subtle than bribery and explicit agreements. *See McConnell v. FEC*, 540 U.S. 93, 144, 150-54, 124 S.Ct. 619, 157 L. Ed. 2d 491 (2003) (corruption and appearance of corruption extend beyond bribery to other arrangements which create "sense of obligation" in or "undue influence" over officeholders); *Shrink Missouri Gov't PAC*, 528 U.S. at 389, 120 S.Ct. 897 ("In speaking of 'improper influence' and 'opportunities for abuse' in addition to '*quid pro quo* arrangements,' we recognized a concern not confined to bribery of public officials, but extending to the broader threat from politicians too compliant with the wishes of large contributors. These were the obvious points behind our recognition that the Congress could constitutionally address the power of money to 'influence governmental action' in ways less 'blatant and specific' than bribery."); *Nat'l Right to Work Comm.*, 459 U.S. at 210, 103 S.Ct. 552 ("Nor will we second-guess a legislative determination as to the need for prophylactic measures where corruption is the evil feared.").

Admittedly, the concern with corruption in the campaign finance cases focuses on payment of money. While the solicitation clause also deals with money-raising, the partisan activities clauses do not, which distinguishes them from the campaign finance cases. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court's decision in *United States Civil Serv. Comm'n v. Nat'l Ass'n of Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. 548, 93 S.Ct. 2880, 37 L. Ed. 2d 796 (1973), demonstrates that the concern with

corruption and undue influence is not limited to obligations resulting from payments of money. *Letter Carriers* recognized the danger partisan allegiances posed to neutral administration of justice. That case upheld restraints imposed by the Hatch Act on executive branch employees' political activities, in part because of the effect partisanship could have on the performance of their duties:

> It seems fundamental in the first place that employees in the Executive Branch of the Government, or those working for any of its agencies, should administer the law in accordance with the will of Congress, rather than in accordance with their own or the will of a political party. They are expected to enforce the law and execute the programs of the Government without bias or favoritism for or against any political party or group or the members thereof. A major thesis of the Hatch Act is that to serve this great end of Government—the impartial execution of the laws—it is essential that federal employees, for example, not take formal positions in political parties, not undertake to play substantial roles in partisan political campaigns, and not run for office on partisan political tickets. Forbidding activities like these will reduce the hazards to fair and effective government.

413 U.S. at 564-65, 93 S.Ct. 2880. *Accord In re Raab*, 100 N.Y.2d 305, 763 N.Y.S.2d 213, 793 N.E.2d 1287, 1290-91 (2003) (per curiam). *Letter Carriers* shows that what kind of obligations may be considered inconsistent with government office depends on the nature of the office in question. Where the office requires "impartial execution of the laws," partisan entanglements can be inconsistent with the demands of the office. *Letter Carriers* and the campaign finance cases are not separate lines of authority, but are closely connected, since the Supreme Court relied heavily on *Letter Carriers* in identifying and defining the anti-

corruption interest in *Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. at 27, 96 S.Ct. 612.

The Republican Party of Minnesota argues that the holding of *Letter Carriers* is irrelevant here because "the role of judges is closer to the role of legislators than [the] executive branch bureaucrats" affected by *Letter Carriers*. Supplemental brief of Oct. 22, 2002 at 6 n. 6. The Supreme Court in *White* specifically avoided equating the judicial office with the legislative: "[W]e neither assert nor imply that the First Amendment requires campaigns for judicial office to sound the same as those for legislative office." 536 U.S. at 783, 122 S.Ct. 2528.

The need for "neutrality" identified in Letter Carriers is even more important for the judicial branch than the executive. A long line of cases stresses the right of litigants to a neutral adjudicator. In *Marshall v. Jerrico, Inc.*, 446 U.S. 238, 242, 100 S.Ct. 1610, 64 L. Ed. 2d 182 (1980), Justice Marshall wrote:

> The Due Process Clause entitles a person to an impartial and disinterested tribunal in both civil and criminal cases. This requirement of neutrality in adjudicative proceedings safeguards the two central concerns of procedural due process, the prevention of unjustified or mistaken deprivations and the promotion of participation and dialogue by affected individuals in the decisionmaking process. The neutrality requirement helps to guarantee that life, liberty, or property will not be taken on the basis of an erroneous or distorted conception of the facts or the law. At the same time, it preserves both the appearance and reality of fairness, "generating the feeling, so important to a popular government, that justice has been done," by ensuring that no person will be deprived of his interests in the absence of a proceeding in which he may present his case with assurance that the arbiter is not predisposed to find against him.

(citations omitted).

The circumstances that can result in violation of the due process right to a neutral judge are not limited to situations in which a judge has a pecuniary interest at stake in the litigation. In *Ward v. Village of Monroeville*, 409 U.S. 57, 93 S.Ct. 80, 34 L. Ed. 2d 267 (1972), due process was violated when the defendant was convicted by the mayor of a village that depended on fines collected in the mayor's court. The mayor himself did not share in the revenues, but the Supreme Court held:

> [T]he test is whether the mayor's situation is one "which would offer a possible temptation to the average man as a judge to forget the burden of proof required to convict the defendant, or which might lead him not to hold the balance nice, clear and true between the State and the accused ...." [quoting *Tumey v. Ohio*, 273 U.S. 510, 532, 47 S.Ct. 437, 71 L.Ed. 749 (1927).] Plainly that "possible temptation" may also exist when the mayor's executive responsibilities for village finances may make him partisan to maintain the high level of contribution from the mayor's court. This, too, is a "situation in which an official perforce occupies two practically and seriously inconsistent positions, one partisan and the other judicial," [and] necessarily involves a lack of due process of law in the trial of defendants charged with crimes before him.

Id. at 60, 93 S.Ct. 80. Other cases in which a judge's neutrality was intolerably compromised by non-pecuniary considerations include *Johnson v. Mississippi*, 403 U.S. 212, 215-16, 91 S.Ct. 1778, 29 L. Ed. 2d 423 (1971) (judge who had previously lost a civil rights suit to defendant could not try defendant for contempt); *In re Murchison*, 349 U.S. 133, 75 S.Ct. 623, 99 L.Ed. 942 (1955) (judge who acts as "one-man judge-grand jury" cannot then try indicted defendant); and *Offutt v. United States*, 348 U.S. 11, 17, 75

S.Ct. 11, 99 L.Ed. 11 (1954) (judge who had become "personally embroiled" with lawyer could not try the lawyer for contempt). There is no easily applied formula for deciding when a judge has an impermissible interest in litigation; "Circumstances and relationships must be considered." *Murchison*, 349 U.S. at 136, 75 S.Ct. 623. But even at a point where the judge cannot be said to be actually biased, "[O]ur system of law has always endeavored to prevent *even the probability* of unfairness." *Id.* (emphasis added).

We do not have to conclude that adjudication by judges who were selected without the protections of the partisan activities clauses violates the due process rights of the litigants. Indeed, we could not well do so, since, as the Supreme Court remarked in *White*, partisan judicial elections were common in the mid-nineteenth century, when the Fourteenth Amendment was adopted. *See White*, 536 U.S. at 785, 122 S.Ct. 2528 ("[J]udicial elections were generally partisan during this period [nineteenth and early twentieth centuries], the movement toward nonpartisan judicial elections not even beginning until the 1870's."). Currently, some fifteen states maintain partisan judicial elections for at least some of their judges, American Judicature Society, Judicial Selection in the States: Appellate and General Jurisdiction Courts (2004); *see Suessmann v. Lamone*, 383 Md. 697, 862 A.2d 1, 19 (2004) (Maryland circuit court primaries are held to be partisan), and no one contends that the states may not choose this method of selection.

Nevertheless, the participation of judges who have been allowed or forced to make themselves dependent on party largesse for their continued tenure affects the state's ability to provide neutral judges and the public's perception of such neutrality. The state has a compelling interest in keeping its judges free from the odor of self-interest or partisanship. In *Cox v. Louisiana*, 379 U.S. 559, 85 S.Ct. 476, 13 L. Ed. 2d 487 (1965), Cox was convicted of picketing near a courthouse "with the intent of influencing any judge,

juror, witness, or court officer, in the discharge of his duty" after he demonstrated in protest against the arrest of students who would be tried by judges present at the courthouse during the demonstration. *Id.* at 560, 564-65, 85 S.Ct. 476. The law did not prohibit all picketing, but picketing done with the intent to influence the administration of justice. *Cf. Carey v. Brown*, 447 U.S. 455, 460-63, 100 S.Ct. 2286, 65 L. Ed. 2d 263 (1980) (prohibiting picketing for one purpose while allowing it for another is content discrimination). The Supreme Court stated that it was unlikely that the picketing would actually affect the judges' decisions in the students' cases. *Cox*, 379 U.S. at 565, 85 S.Ct. 476. The Court did not suggest that if the state had allowed the picketing, it would have caused a due process violation for any particular litigant. However, the Court said, "A state may protect against the possibility of a conclusion by the public under these circumstances that the judge's action was in part a product of intimidation and did not flow only from the fair and orderly working of the judicial process." *Id.* Thus, the state's interest in preserving the appearance of neutrality justified the restriction on expressive conduct. *Accord In re Chmura*, 461 Mich. 517, 608 N.W.2d 31, 40 (2000) ("state's interest ... extends to preserving public confidence in the judiciary"). *Cf. Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. at 565, 93 S.Ct. 2880 ("[I]t is not only important that the Government and its employees in fact avoid practicing political justice, but it is also critical that they appear to the public to be avoiding it, if confidence in the system of representative Government is not to be eroded to a disastrous extent.").

The New York Court of Appeals recently confirmed that a state has a compelling interest in presenting the appearance as well as the fact of due process:

> [L]itigants have a right guaranteed under the Due Process Clause to a fair and impartial magistrate and the State, as the steward of the judicial system, has

> the obligation to create such a forum and prevent corruption and the appearance of corruption, including political bias or favoritism.

In re Raab, 100 N.Y.2d 305, 763 N.Y.S.2d 213, 793 N.E.2d 1287, 1290-91 (2003) (per curiam).

In its September 2004 deliberations about whether to amend the partisan activities clauses of Canon 5, the Minnesota Supreme Court articulated just those concerns outlined above. The court stated:

> [T]he goal of an impartial judiciary is compelled by the due process rights of litigants. Due process requires decisionmakers who are fair, unbiased, and impartial, and importantly, decisionmakers who are perceived as such by the litigants who appear before them. *See Aetna Life Ins. Co. v. Lavoie*, 475 U.S. 813, 825, 106 S.Ct. 1580, 89 L. Ed. 2d 823 (1986); *In re Raab*, 100 N.Y.2d 305, 763 N.Y.S.2d 213, 793 N.E.2d 1287, 1290-91 (2003) (per curiam). Moreover, we cannot underestimate the importance of the public's perception that judges are fair, unbiased, and impartial to the continued respect for and legitimacy of the judicial branch. *See Mistretta v. United States*, 488 U.S. 361, 407, 109 S.Ct. 647, 102 L. Ed. 2d 714 (1989). Without this perception, the public's confidence and support cannot be maintained and the very independence of the judicial branch mandated by the Constitution will be threatened.

In re Amendment of the Code of Judicial Conduct, No. C4-85-697, slip op. at 4-5 (Minn. Sept. 14, 2004). These concerns fit within the concept of judicial open-mindedness, and they are a compelling state interest.

C.

Although in *White* Justice Scalia observed that the parties and this Court appeared to make no distinction between the concepts of judicial "independence" and "im-

par[illegible]ity," 536 U.S. at 775, 122 S.Ct. 2528 n.6, in its Sep[illegible]ber 14, 2004 order, the Minnesota Supreme Court explained its decision not to amend the partisan activities clauses partly by relying on the need for separation of powers:

> [T]he separation of powers inherent in the creation of three distinct branches of government, one of which is the judicial branch, in article III, section 1 of the Minnesota Constitution provides the constitutional underpinning for the independence of the Minnesota judiciary. As the executive and legislative branches are inextricably intertwined with partisan politics, maintenance of an independent judicial branch is reliant on the freedom of its officials from the control of partisan politics.

In re Amendment of the Code of Judicial Conduct, No. C4-85-697, slip op. at 4-5 (Minn. Sept. 14, 2004). The separation of powers interest is a concern for institutional independence that is distinct from concern for impartiality in any of the senses identified by Justice Scalia.

Separation of powers is a concept basic to the states' constitutions as well as the federal Constitution. A state's choice of how to organize its government is "a decision of the most fundamental sort for a sovereign entity." *See Gregory v. Ashcroft*, 501 U.S. 452, 460, 111 S.Ct. 2395, 115 L. Ed. 2d 410 (1991) (authority of the people of the states to determine qualifications of important state officials is such a decision). Even the narrowest notion of federalism requires us to recognize a state's interest in preserving the separation of powers within its own government as a compelling interest.

D.

The extent and severity of the threat to the state's interests are factual questions that must be proven empirically. *See Shrink Mo. Gov't PAC*, 528 U.S. at 390-94, 120

S.Ct. 897. In the proceedings in the district court, the Boards adduced sufficient evidence of that threat so that summary judgment for the plaintiffs would not have been appropriate. But recent events make it far less appropriate that our Court should enter judgment as a matter of law on questions of fact as to which there is no record before us.

The record below contained the affidavit of a former governor of Minnesota who stated that he had a lifetime of experience in understanding how Minnesota citizens "think and feel" and that partisan judicial campaigns would lessen Minnesotans' confidence "in the independence of the judiciary." A former Chief Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court stated that partisan judicial campaigns would "put pressure on judges to decide cases in ways that would impress the judge's supporters favorably."

But far more important to our holding today is the fact that the Minnesota Supreme Court has recently reconsidered the provisions of Canon 5 at issue here, held hearings, and received public comment. It is a matter of interest that the parties in this case, in briefing and argument, made no mention of this development. As the canon was reconsidered, amended in part and reiterated in part while this case was pending on rehearing, failure to consider the effect of these developments may well cause this Court's opinion to be moot from its inception.

This suit seeks a permanent injunction; the relief the Court orders today does not merely look to the past, when the district court record was made, but operates in the present and into the future. *See* Stuart Minor Benjamin, *Stepping Into the Same River Twice: Rapidly Changing Facts and the Appellate Process*, 78 Tex. L. Rev. 269, 276-77 (1999) (where relief is prospective, appellate court should respond to changes in facts that affect validity of legal ruling). The Supreme Court in a number of cases has made clear that we must consider on appeal any change, either in fact or in law, which has supervened since the judgment was

entered. The Court in *Ashcraft v. Tennessee*, 322 U.S. 143, 156, 64 S.Ct. 921, 88 L.Ed. 1192 (1944), stated: "In disposing of cases before us it is our responsibility to make such disposition as justice may require. 'And in determining what justice does require, the Court is bound to consider any change, either in fact or in law, which has supervened since the judgment was entered.' *Patterson v. Alabama*, 294 U.S. 600, 607, 55 S.Ct. 575, 79 L.Ed. 1082 [1935]; *State Tax Commission v. Van Cott*, 306 U.S. 511, 515-16, 59 S.Ct. 605, 83 L.Ed. 950 [1939]."

The Advisory Committee appointed by the Minnesota Supreme Court to study the issue concluded that there was a threat to the state's interest that required regulation of partisanship in judicial campaigns: "In considering the need for restrictions on the political activity of judicial election candidates, the Advisory Committee is also cognizant of the experience of actual or perceived corruption of the judiciary in states that permit partisan judicial elections." Report of the Advisory Committee to Review the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct and the Rules of the Board on Judicial Standards, Comments–Canon 5, No. C4-85-697 (Minn. April 15, 2004). While we do not have access to the evidence before the Committee, widely available and publicized evidence substantiates the fear that the majority of the public believes that partisanship does influence the decisions of state courts. For instance, a poll conducted in 1999 showed that 81% of the respondents agreed that "politics influences court decisions." National Center for State Courts, How the Public Views the State Courts 41 (1999). The Advisory Committee recommended deleting the party identification and the attend and speak clauses on narrow tailoring grounds. Advisory Committee Report at Comments—Canon 5. After receiving the Committee report and conducting a hearing and receiving public comment, the Minnesota Supreme Court decided to retain all three par-

tisan activities clauses. *In re Amendment of the Code of Judicial Conduct*, No. c4-85-697 (Minn. Sept. 14, 2004).

The Advisory Committee unanimously recommended against changing the ban on the judicial candidate's personal solicitation of campaign contributions. Advisory Committee Report at Canon 5B(2)—Personal Solicitation of Campaign Contributions. Again, widely available poll numbers support the Committee's conclusion that solicitation of campaign contributions carries with it a significant threat to the state's interest in freedom from external coercion of judges. For example, "a recent Wisconsin poll found that more than three-quarters of those surveyed believe that campaign contributions from lawyers and plaintiffs in high-profile cases influence the decisions of these judges in court," and a study in Texas "found that 83 percent of the public and 79 percent of lawyers believe that campaign contributions have a significant influence on a judge's decision." Alexander Wohl, *Justice for Rent*, The American Prospect (May 22, 2000). A summary of poll results compiled by the National Center for State Courts reported on fifteen recent polls, showing not only that the public believes campaign contributions affect judicial decisions, but also that lawyers and even judges agree. For instance, a poll from Texas showed that 48% of state appellate and trial judges surveyed believed that campaign contributions had a fairly significant or very significant degree of influence over judicial decisionmaking. National Center for State Courts, Summary of Responses to Public Opinion Survey Questions Concerning Judicial Campaign Fundraising (July 28, 2004). A Pennsylvania survey of registered voters showed that 95% of those surveyed believed that judges' decisions were influenced by large contributions to their election campaigns at least some of the time. *Id.* This is the kind of evidence that would substantiate the threat to judicial open-mindedness (and the

appearance of it) from partisan obligations and from judicial campaign fund-raising.

The Court today errs grievously in issuing a ruling that strikes the provisions based on the 1997 factual record without considering the September 2004 record before the Minnesota Supreme Court. *Cf. Ashcroft v. ACLU*, 542 U.S. 656, 124 S.Ct. 2783, 2794, 159 L. Ed. 2d 690 (2004) (taking into account technological changes in internet filtering since time of district court's findings). Since the holding is based on a factual record that antedates the most recent version of Canon 5, one must question whether the Court's holding today even applies to the current version of Canon 5, based as it is, on a 2004 factual determination which the Court does not take into account.

E.

The Court today holds that Minnesota's interest in judicial open-mindedness is not a compelling interest because the solicitation and partisan activities clauses are "underinclusive," meaning that they do not address all "significant threats" to the state's asserted interest. Slip op. at 32 [33a-34a]. The Court today says that underinclusiveness of a regulation will establish that the state's purported interest is not compelling:

> A clear indicator of the degree to which an interest is 'compelling' is the tightness of the fit between the regulation and the purported interest: where the regulation fails to address significant influences that impact the purported interest, it usually flushes out the fact that the interest does not rise to the level of being 'compelling.'

Op. at 750 [16a]. This is only partly correc nd the part that is correct is not relevant to our case.

Where the governmental actor asserts an interest that has not been previously recognized as compelling and either the importance of the interest or the urgency of the threat

to the interest is debatable, adoption of a regulation that is only partly effective may show that the governmental actor can, indeed, live with the problem. Where the state's asserted interest is previously unrecognized as compelling and is not self-evidently vital to the state's ability to function as intended in the Constitution, then the state's own lack of zeal or care in protecting the interest does argue that the asserted interest should not be considered paramount to individuals' First Amendment rights.

However valid that reasoning may be in cases where the asserted interest is novel or questionable, it is not valid here because the interests at stake in this case have already been recognized as compelling. Compelling interests cannot be negated simply because a particular measure adopted in their name is deemed ineffective. The Court today acknowledges that avoiding judicial bias that denies litigants due process is a compelling interest, whether or not a particular measure furthers it effectively.[18] Likewise, protecting the integrity of the states' courts has long been recognized as compelling, and by the same reasoning, that interest cannot be negated simply because a particular measure may not protect it fully. As Justice Kennedy wrote in his concurrence in *White*:

> Here, Minnesota has sought to justify its speech restriction as one necessary to maintain the integrity of its judiciary. Nothing in the Court's opinion should be read to cast doubt on the vital importance of this state interest. Courts, in our system, elaborate principles of law in the course of resolving disputes. The power and the prerogative of a court to perform this function rest, in the end, upon the respect accorded to its judgments. The citizen's respect for judgments

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[18] "It can hardly be argued that seeking to uphold a constitutional protection, such as due process, is not per se a compelling state interest." Slip op. at 22 [22a].

> depends in turn upon the issuing court's absolute probity. Judicial integrity is, in consequence, a state interest of the highest order.

536 U.S. at 793, 122 S.Ct. 2528. It is a misreading of the Supreme Court's underinclusiveness discussions, and, most significantly, a non sequitur as well, to say that the interest in judicial integrity could be reduced to insignificance because Canon 5 does not go far enough to protect it.

F.

Preserving judicial open-mindedness, and the appearance of it, should be recognized as the same compelling state interest in avoiding corruption interest that was identified in *Buckley v. Valeo* and the campaign finance cases. Though it is the same anti-corruption interest, the need to protect that interest is more urgent and vital in the context of the judiciary because in that context outside influences threaten litigants' due process interest in adjudication in accord with the law and the facts of their case. A further state interest in preserving the separation of powers between state branches of government should also be recognized as compelling. The Minnesota Supreme Court has recently re-examined Canon 5 and clarified that the Canon is meant to protect those state interests. Judicial integrity and separation of powers are interests of the highest importance in guaranteeing the proper functioning of state government and we have no warrant to deny their importance.

II.

A.

Though the Court today errs in holding that underinclusiveness of a regulation can negate the importance of the state's interest in the integrity of its judiciary, underinclusiveness does indeed point to a different problem—it raises an inference of pretext. Even where an asserted governmental interest is undeniably compelling, a

failure to fully address threats to that compelling interest can be evidence of pretext. The governmental actor may have missed the target because it was not aiming at it, but was actually seeking to accomplish some other, impermissible goal, such as viewpoint discrimination. In such a case, underinclusiveness of a regulation does not cast doubt on whether the asserted interest is compelling, but whether it is genuine. *See Johnson v. California*, — U.S. —, —, 125 S.Ct. 1141, 1156, 160 L. Ed. 2d 949 (2005) (Stevens, J., dissenting) (failure to take measures that would be more effective at addressing prison violence than challenged regulation "undercuts the sincerity" of the state's concern about violence). This is the same point Justice Scalia made in *White* when he quoted his earlier words, "[A] law cannot be regarded as protecting an interest of the highest order, and thus as justifying a restriction upon truthful speech, when it leaves appreciable damage to that supposedly vital interest unprohibited," *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 536 U.S. 765, 780, 122 S.Ct. 2528, 153 L. Ed. 2d 694 (2002) (quoting *Florida Star v. B.J.F.*, 491 U.S. 524, 541-42, 109 S.Ct. 2603, 105 L. Ed. 2d 443 (1989) (Scalia, J., concurring in judgment)), and spoke of a "challenge to the credulous." *White*, 536 U.S. at 780, 122 S.Ct. 2528.

The Supreme Court has twice upheld speech restrictions on strict scrutiny review where the measure was tailored to address only the most critical threat to the governmental interest, even where some threat to the asserted interest remained unaddressed. *See Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce*, 494 U.S. 652, 110 S.Ct. 1391, 108 L. Ed. 2d 652 (1990), and *McConnell v. FEC*, 540 U.S. 93, 124 S.Ct. 619, 157 L. Ed. 2d 491 (2003). In *Austin*, Michigan restricted the political expenditures of corporations in support of or opposition to candidates for state office. The compelling interest for such regulation was the concern that entities that amassed wealth in the economic marketplace would parlay that wealth into "unfair advantage in the

political marketplace," *id.* at 659, 110 S.Ct. 1391, because their ability to spend corporate money bore no relation to political support for the ideas the corporations spent their money to promote, *id.* at 659-60, 110 S.Ct. 1391 (opinion of Court) and 670, 672 (Brennan, J., concurring). The Chamber of Commerce attacked the Michigan law as underinclusive because it did not regulate expenditures by unincorporated labor unions, which also amassed political war chests. *Id.* at 665, 110 S.Ct. 1391.

Austin rejected the underinclusiveness challenge, reasoning that the corporations enjoyed greater government-conferred legal advantages enhancing their ability to accumulate wealth. 494 U.S. at 665, 110 S.Ct. 1391. These legal advantages of corporate form made a crucial distinction between corporations and unions. *Id.* at 666, 110 S.Ct. 1391 ("Michigan's decision to exclude unincorporated labor unions from the scope of § 54(1) is therefore justified by the crucial differences between unions and corporations."). Additionally, case law permitted union members to opt out of contributing to the union's political activities, which meant that "the funds available for a union's political activities more accurately reflects members' support for the organization's political views than does a corporation's general treasury." *Id.* The Michigan law therefore passed strict scrutiny.

The Supreme Court also upheld a statute on strict scrutiny review despite an underinclusiveness attack in its recent campaign finance case, *McConnell v. FEC.* In *McConnell*, the Court considered a challenge to section 203 of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, which in turn amended section 316(b)(2) of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, to prohibit use of corporations' and unions' treasury funds to pay for certain kinds of election advertising. 540 U.S. at 204 & n. 87, 124 S.Ct. 619. Because the provision restricted expenditures rather than contributions, it had to be tested by strict scrutiny. *Id.* at 205, 124

S.Ct. 619 (asking whether "compelling governmental interest justifies" measure); *id.* at 330, 124 S.Ct. 619 (Kennedy, J., dissenting) ("All parties agree strict scrutiny applies [to section 203]."). The plaintiffs contended that the section was underinclusive because it did not apply to election advertising in the print media or on the Internet. *Id.* at 207, 124 S.Ct. 619. The Court held that the evidence in the case supported the conclusion that television advertising posed the greater threat, and therefore, "The record amply justifie[d] Congress' line drawing." *Id.* at 208, 124 S.Ct. 619. The Court said that "reform may take one step at a time, addressing itself to the phase of the problem which seems most acute to the legislative mind." *Id.* at 207-08, 124 S.Ct. 619 (quoting *Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1, 105, 96 S.Ct. 612, 46 L. Ed. 2d 659 (1976)). *McConnell* confirms that the sort of underinclusiveness that is fatal in strict scrutiny is arbitrary underinclusiveness, not underinclusiveness that results from attempting to focus the restriction on only the severest form of the threat to a compelling governmental interest.

A content-based restriction was also upheld on strict scrutiny review despite an underinclusiveness challenge in *Burson v. Freeman*, 504 U.S. 191, 207, 112 S.Ct. 1846, 119 L. Ed. 2d 5 (1992). Freeman contended that a statute restricting campaign activity within 100 feet of the polls on election day was underinclusive because it did not restrict other types of speech, including commercial solicitation and exit polling. The Court rejected that attack because there was "simply no evidence that political candidates have used other forms of solicitation or exit polling to commit ... electoral abuses." *Id.* Thus, whether the statute was impermissibly underinclusive depended on the evidence about the extent and severity of the threat to the state's asserted interest.

B.

The question at issue in our consideration of the partisan activities clauses, as in *Austin*, is whether there is a "crucial difference," 494 U.S. at 666, 110 S.Ct. 1391, in the threat posed by some entities that justified regulating them while leaving others unregulated. To rebut the inference of pretext, the government must show that the speech it has burdened poses a different, more serious threat to its asserted interest than the speech it chose not to regulate. *See Erznoznik v. City of Jacksonville*, 422 U.S. 205, 215, 95 S.Ct. 2268, 45 L. Ed. 2d 125 (1975) ("[E]ven a traffic regulation cannot discriminate on the basis of content unless there are clear reasons for the distinctions."); Eugene Volokh, *Freedom of Speech, Permissible Tailoring and Transcending Strict Scrutiny*, 144 U. Penn. L. Rev. 2417, 2423 (1966) ("[A] law is not narrowly tailored if it fails to restrict a significant amount of speech that harms the government interest *to about the same degree as does the restricted speech*.") (emphasis added); *In re Dunleavy*, 838 A.2d 338, 351 (Me. 2003) ("Canon 5(A)(1)(e) is narrowly tailored to meet [state's interest in avoiding bias] because it applies only to conduct which presents the greatest risk to that interest ...."), *cert. denied*, 541 U.S. 960, 124 S.Ct. 1722, 158 L. Ed. 2d 401 (2004).

Recently, the Supreme Court has held that the differences between political parties and other interest groups could warrant differential regulation of the two kinds of groups. This distinction between political parties and other interest groups was at issue in *McConnell*, where the Court considered Title I of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, which imposed restrictions on political parties' fund-raising activities that were not imposed on interest groups, such as the National Rifle Association, the American Civil Liberties Union or the Sierra Club. The plaintiffs contended that the distinction violated Equal Protection. The Court held the distinction was permissible, because

> Congress is fully entitled to consider the real-world differences between political parties and interest groups when crafting a system of campaign finance regulation. Interest groups do not select slates of candidates for elections. Interest groups do not determine who will serve on legislative committees, elect congressional leadership, or organize legislative caucuses. Political parties have influence and power in the legislature that vastly exceeds that of any interest group .... Congress' efforts at campaign finance regulation may account for these salient differences.

540 U.S. at 188, 124 S.Ct. 619 (citation omitted).[19]

Before the district court, the Boards contended that special restrictions on judicial candidates' reliance on political parties were necessary to protect Minnesota's tradition of non-partisan judicial elections, which dates from the enactment in 1912 of the statute making Minnesota judicial elections non-partisan. *See* 1912 Minn. Laws, Spec. Sess., ch. 2; *Peterson v. Stafford*, 490 N.W.2d 418, 422 (Minn. 1992) (discussing history of Minnesota's judicial elections).

The Minnesota Supreme Court greatly amplified that explanation when it decided to reject the Advisory Committee's proposed revisions to the partisan activities clauses in September 2004. The supreme court order stated, "We conclude that the restrictions on partisan political activity contained in our Code of Judicial Conduct are too important

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[19] As Dean Briffault has observed:

> The "special relationship" between parties and officeholders that the Court recognized in *McConnell* can also threaten judicial independence by too closely linking judges to party leaders and the preferences of those leaders, even in cases in which neither the party leaders nor the party itself are participating.

Richard Briffault, *Judicial Campaign Codes after Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 153 U. Penn. L. Rev. 181, 232 (2004). This substantiates the threat to the separation of powers interest discussed in section IC, *supra*.

to undermine based on the possibility that they may be vulnerable to constitutional attack, particularly as we are convinced that there are sound bases for their constitutional validity." *In re Amendment of the Code of Judicial Conduct*, No. C4-85-697, slip op. at 2-3 (Minn. Sept.14, 2004). The court then reviewed the history of Minnesota's commitment to non-partisan judicial elections. *Id.* at 639 N.W.2d 55.

The movement towards non-partisan judicial elections was a reform movement meant to insulate judges from the party machines that had captured the state courts during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. F. Andrew Hanssen, *Learning About Judicial Independence: Institutional Change in the State Courts*, 33 J. Legal Studies 431, 448-50 (2004). Between 1910 and 1958, eighteen states adopted non-partisan judicial elections. *Id.* at 436. Among states that elect their judges, the majority use nonpartisan elections; currently, twenty states have nonpartisan elections for at least some of their judgeships, as opposed to fifteen who have at least some partisan elections.[20] American Judicature Society, Judicial Selection in the States: Appellate and General Jurisdiction Courts (2004); *see Suessmann v. Lamone*, 383 Md. 697, 862 A.2d 1, 19 (Md. 2004) (Maryland circuit court primaries are held to be partisan). Among the states with non-partisan judicial elections, there is a wide variety of measures to enforce the

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[20] Some states have both partisan and non-partisan elections for different offices; in this dissent they are counted as both partisan and non-partisan election states. Some states have hybrid systems in which candidates are nominated through party primaries or conventions, but appear without party designation on the general election ballot. These hybrid-system states are here counted as partisan election states, following the classification used by the American Judicature Society. *See* American Judicature Society, Judicial Selection in the States: Appellate and General Jurisdiction Courts (2004).

non-partisan character of the election; some states have few such measures, but many have measures similar to those at issue here.[21] Thus, the idea that non-partisan campaigns

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[21] Of the twenty states with at least some non-partisan judicial elections, nine have restrictions of some kind on stating party affiliation, and one forbids actual party affiliation. Ark. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5A(1)(f) and 5C(1)(a)(iii) (candidate may privately, but not publicly, identify self as affiliated with political party); Fla.Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7C(3) ("The candidate should refrain from commenting on the candidate's affiliation with any political party ...."); Ky. Supreme Court Rule 4.300, Canon 5A(2) ("A judge or candidate shall not identify himself or herself as a member of a political party in any form of advertising, or when speaking to a gathering. If not initiated by the judge or candidate for such office, and only in answer to a direct question, the judge or candidate may identify himself or herself as a member of a particular political party."); Minn. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5A(1)(a); Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-973 ("It shall be unlawful for any candidate for any of the offices mentioned in this section to align himself with ... any political faction or any political party at any time during any primary or general election campaign."); Nev. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(1)(ii) (candidate may identify party "upon request"); Ore. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 4-102(C) (judicial candidate shall not knowingly "[p]ublicly identify the judicial candidate for the purpose of election, as a member of a political party other than by registering to vote or as allowed by ORS 249.015."); S.D. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(1)(a)(ii) (judge may identify self as member of political party "for voting purposes only"); Wash. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7(A)(1)(e) (judicial candidates shall not "identify themselves as members of a political party, except as necessary to vote in an election."), *enforced In re Kaiser*, 111 Wash. 2d 275, 759 P.2d 392, 400 (1988); Wis. S.Ct. Rule 60.06(2)(b) (judicial candidates shall not be a member of any political party).

Arkansas and Florida allow speaking at party gatherings only if the candidate's opponent is also invited to speak. Ark. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5 C(1); Fla. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7C(3).

Three other states directly or indirectly prohibit a candidate from seeking party endorsement. Ark. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5A(1)(d); Idaho Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5A(1)(d); Miss. Code Ann.

might protect the judiciary from improper external pressures is hardly a novel idea, but must be placed within a broad national reform movement that still has significant sway within the states.

The partisan activities clauses at issue here were adopted in 1997 as part of an effort to clarify and formalize Minnesota's tradition of non-partisan elections and to supplement the guidance given by the non-partisan election statute. The mere omission of party names from the ballot apparently does little to make campaigns non-partisan, as shown by the situations in Ohio and Michigan, where ostensibly non-partisan general elections are preceded by vigorous partisan campaigns. *See* American Bar Ass'n Commission on the 21st Century Judiciary, Justice in Jeopardy 17 (2003) ("Even states with ostensibly non-partisan general elections for judges, such as Michigan and Ohio, have experienced highly politicized races when two-party competition is fierce and the party affiliations of the candidates are widely known."); *id.* at 77 ("States with true nonpartisan elections, such as those in Wisconsin, must therefore be distinguished from states such as Michigan, where the political parties nominate candidates to run in ostensibly nonpartisan general elections, which in fact have been very partisan indeed."); Anthony Champagne, *Political Parties and Judicial Elections*, 34 Loy. L.A.L. Rev. 1411, 1415-16 n. 16 (Michigan, Ohio, and Idaho have non-partisan ballots but partisan campaigns). M. DePaul Willette, Executive Secretary of the Board on Judicial Standards, stated to the Minnesota Supreme Court, "The nonpartisan nature of Minnesota's judicial elections have been taken for granted. But a search of the statutes and rules showed there is, in fact, very little, if any, specific language describing what nonpartisan elections are."

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§ 23-15-973 ("It shall be unlawful for any candidate . . . to align himself . . . with any political faction or any political party . . . .").

Comments to the Minnesota Supreme Court, No. C7-81-300 at 2 (Nov. 14, 1997). Willette's commentary on the proposed amendments to Canon 5, which contained the three partisan activities clauses at issue here, shows that the Board was animated by a desire to effectuate more completely the nonpartisan election statute and formalize the tradition of nonpartisan elections that the Board believed was not adequately protected by existing Minnesota law. One of the changes made to Canon 5 in 1997 was to include the statement, "Each justice of the supreme court and each court of appeals and district court judge is deemed to hold a separate nonpartisan office. MS 204B.06 Subd. 6." Canon 5A (1997). The Board on Judicial Standards announced in proposing the amendments that they were meant to protect Minnesota's "long tradition of nonpartisan judicial elections." Comments to the Minnesota Supreme Court, No. C7-81-300 at 4 (Nov. 14, 1997).

The hearing the Minnesota Supreme Court held before the 1997 amendments to Canon 5 included consideration of whether partisan activities restrictions should be limited to political parties as defined in Canon 5 or whether they should apply to other advocacy groups. There was testimony on both sides of that issue. In addition to the testimony of Judge Meyer (which the Court quotes at slip op. 36-37 [37a-38a] n. 13) and others against the definition adopted, DePaul Willette testified:

> Let's assume that the rule is not in place and two candidates in a race; one is endorsed by the republican party, one is endorsed by the democratic party. What do we have? We have a party race. It's not a nonpartisan contest. We have a party contest which will lead us, in my judgment, to the kind of fundraising and the problems that Illinois and Texas are facing today with multi-million dollar budgets for people who want to retain or gain judicial positions.

Hearing before the Minnesota Supreme Court on Amendment to Canon 5 of the Code of Judicial Conduct, at 20-21 (Nov. 17, 1997).

Willette's testimony also refutes the idea that the Minnesota Supreme Court intentionally failed to address the threat from partisan activity by single-issue interest groups. Willette testified that one reason single-issue interest groups were not included in the partisan activities clauses is that single-issue groups would require a commitment that would have been banned under the announce clause at the time. *See id.* at 12-13. Obviously, the announce clause can no longer play any role in the regulatory scheme; however, the Minnesota Supreme Court's expectation that the announce clause would serve to moderate a candidate's relation with interest groups was reasonable at the time and therefore tends to show that the partisan activities clauses were effective at the time adopted. Moreover, the invalidation of the announce clause has apparently had a profound effect on the pressures on judicial candidates in that it is apparently now common for organizations to send judicial candidates questionnaires asking them to state their positions on an array of disputed legal issues. *See, e.g., North Dakota Family Alliance, Inc. v. Bader*, 361 F. Supp. 2d 1021, 1027 (D.N.D.2005) (example of "voter's guide" questionnaire submitted to judicial candidates in North Dakota, including items asking candidate to agree or disagree with statements such as: "I believe that the North Dakota Constitution does not recognize a right to homosexual sexual relationships" and "I believe that the North Dakota Constitution does not recognize a right to abortion."). In light of the invalidation of the announce clause, I believe a remand for further evidence on the issue of pretext would be more appropriate than for us to order summary judgment on a record with evidence supporting both sides of the question.

Once again, the most pertinent evidence about the thinking behind the current Canon 5 is evidence that has not yet been presented to the district court. The Advisory Committee in 2004 reviewed *McConnell* and other Supreme Court case law and concluded:

> In the Advisory Committee's view, there is ample support for Canon 5's current limitation of the political activity restrictions to political party activities, while leaving unregulated candidate activities relating to special interest or other groups that do not rise to the level of a political party. As noted above, *McConnell* itself clearly supports the validity of this limitation in order to promote the compelling interests in judicial impartiality, independence, and appearance of impartiality and independence.

Advisory Committee Report, Comments—Canon 5. The Committee reasoned that parties differ from other interest groups in the degree of symbiosis that exists between candidate and party and in the unique role that political parties play in the workings of the other branches of government. *Id.* Finally, the Committee concluded that recusal was not an adequate remedy for the problems posed by partisan involvement in judicial elections because recusal requests depend on the parties' ability to know all relevant facts, because recusal involves significant administrative costs, and because it may simply be inadequate to counteract the damage to the reputation of the judiciary from the appearance of institutional partiality. *Id.* The Committee later noted that a minority within the committee had been concerned that the restrictions were underinclusive in failing to address special interest and other political groups, but that "the Committee as a whole acknowledges that it would be difficult to draft a workable rule to limit involvement by special interest or other political groups for a number of reasons." *Id.* at Application of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

McConnell demonstrates that the distinction between political parties and other interest groups could be defended as a valid response to "salient differences" between the kind of threat each sort of organization poses to the state's interests. In addition to its institutional experience with non-partisan judicial elections since 1912, in 1997 the Minnesota Supreme Court had before it some evidence validating the distinction between political parties and other interest groups, and some challenging that distinction. It resolved that conflict, concluding that political parties posed the greater threat. The conclusion was reaffirmed in 2004 by a committee of lawyers and scholars charged with the task of scrutinizing Canon 5 for constitutional problems, and later by the Minnesota Supreme Court. Our Court errs in concluding as a matter of law that the distinction between political parties and other interest groups is pretextual. The evidence as to this distinction is best considered by the district court on remand.

III.

Our Court's underinclusiveness analysis goes astray by failing to recognize a compelling interest and by failing to allow the Boards to rebut the inference of pretext. Sections I & II, *supra*. But the signal failing of the Court's underinclusiveness analysis is that it envisions a kind of strict scrutiny[22] that simply cannot work when applied to

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[22] Whether strict scrutiny should be applied to the solicitation clause is not entirely free from doubt. In an amicus brief filed in this en banc rehearing, the Conference of Chief Justices argues that the personal solicitation ban regulates contributions to a political candidate and therefore should not be subjected to strict scrutiny, but to the lesser standard appropriate to campaign contribution limitations. Conference of Chief Justices' brief at p. 16. This argument finds support in *McConnell v. FEC*, 540 U.S. 93, 138-41, 124 S.Ct. 619, 157 L. Ed. 2d 491 (2003), which applied the less rigorous scrutiny wher reviewing a law restricting national political parties' ability to solicit contributions. *See also* Richard Briffault, *Judicial*

real cases because it does not take into account the need for limited deference to the state's attempt to solve the problems that besiege it.

"Deference" is not a word we associate with strict scrutiny review, but there is indeed a place for limited deference, as shown in the recent case of *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306, 328, 123 S.Ct. 2325, 156 L. Ed. 2d 304 (2003) ("The Law School's educational judgment that such diversity is essential to its educational mission is one to which we defer."). There are three reasons why we should employ some limited deference to the judgment of the state of Minnesota in this case, if after remand, we were satisfied that the judgment was well-supported by cogent evidence and the possibility of pretext had been rebutted.

The Court's primary reason for striking the partisan activities clauses today is that the provisions are underinclusive. The main thrust of the narrow-tailoring requirement is directly to protect speech rights by avoiding an infringement broader than the need to protect the government's interest: "The purpose of the test is to ensure that speech is restricted no further than necessary to achieve the goal, for it is important to assure that legitimate speech is not chilled or punished." *Ashcroft v. ACLU*, 542 U.S. 656, 124 S.Ct. 2783, 2791, 159 L. Ed. 2d 690 (2004). Exacting, de novo review by the courts to assure that the government has chosen the least restrictive alternative directly protects

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Campaign Codes after Republican Party of Minnesota v. White, 153 U. Pa. L. Rev. 181, 225-26 (2004) ("The restriction on personal solicitation by a candidate should be subject to the same less rigorous standard of review as the restriction on contributions."). Because the parties have assumed the same level of scrutiny would apply to the solicitation clause as to the other provisions of Canon 5, neither the panel opinion in *Kelly*, 247 F.3d 854 (8th Cir. 2001), nor that on remand, 361 F.3d 1035, 1048-50 (8th Cir. 2004), entertained the possibility that the contributions standard should apply. Though the argument is worthy of more attention, I will follow the parties and our Court in assuming the proper standard is strict scrutiny.

the individual's speech right. The objection that a measure is underinclusive, on the other hand, cuts in the opposite direction; it being the command of the First Amendment not to abridge the freedom of speech, one is at first surprised to learn that a law can offend the First Amendment because the law does not forbid enough speech. The vice in an underinclusive law is not that the underinclusiveness directly suppresses speech but that it raises a suspicion of pretext—which is just an inference, and which can be rebutted by sufficient evidence. Even in questions subject to strict scrutiny, there simply has to be some room for judgment about how wide to cast the net, and it should be apparent that it is more offensive to the First Amendment for a measure to be too broad than to be too narrow. The problem with applying the same kind of exacting, de novo review to underinclusiveness as we do to overinclusiveness is that the two requirements form a Catch 22 situation, in which a drafter's very effort to avoid overinclusiveness makes the measure vulnerable to attack for underinclusiveness.[21]

In *McConnell*, even when applying strict scrutiny, the Court acknowledged the need for "legislative choice" and "Congress' line drawing." 540 U.S. at 207-08, 124 S.Ct. 619. Thus, when considering the argument that the restrictions on corporations' and unions' expenditures for "electioneering communications" were underinclusive because they did not extend to print or internet advertising, the Court quoted *Buckley* in stating that "reform may take one step at a time, addressing itself to the phase of the problem

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[21] The overinclusive-underinclusive trap is illustrated in the advice given to would-be drafters of revisions to state canons of judicial ethics that general language can be attacked as vague or overbroad, but specific provisions make the canon vulnerable to charges of underinclusiveness. *See* J.J. Gass, After *White*: Defending and Amending Canons of Judicial Ethics 23 (Brennan Center for Justice 2004).

which seems most acute to the legislative mind." *Id.* The Court rejected the argument that the restriction on expenditures for electioneering communications was underinclusive because it did not include print or internet ads; in order to respond to the problem at all, Congress had to be able to draw lines somewhere: "One might just as well argue that the electioneering communication definition is underinclusive because it leaves advertising 61 days in advance of an election entirely unregulated." *Id.* at 208, 96 S.Ct. 612. The Court considered it obvious that someone had to decide whether the restrictions should take effect 60 days or 61 days in advance of the election; if Congress had to be able to show that the problem was utterly eradicated by the 60-day limit and no part of the problem persisted by allowing the same conduct on the 61st day, the legislation would, of course, have failed.

A second reason for some limited deference is that this is a case of competing constitutional interests, so that whatever protection is afforded First Amendment interests comes at the expense of due process and separation of powers interests. *See In re Raab*, 100 N.Y.2d 305, 763 N.Y.S.2d 213, 793 N.E.2d 1287, 1292 (N.Y.2003) ("[A] number of competing interests are at stake, almost all of a constitutional magnitude. Not only must the State respect the First Amendment rights of judicial candidates and voters but also it must simultaneously ensure that the judicial system is fair and impartial for all litigants, free of the taint of political bias or corruption, or even the appearance of such bias or corruption."); Roy Schotland, *Myth, Reality, Post and Present, and Judicial Elections*, 35 Ind. L. Rev. 659, 665 (2002) ("Referring to constitutional rights [in judicial election context], without even mentioning due process, is stunning shallowness."). In the order promulgating the September 2004 version of Canon 5, the Minnesota Supreme Court made this very point: "The goal of maintaining an independent and impartial judiciary is not

merely a policy choice, but embodies constitutional principles that are properly counterbalanced against the First Amendment interests that are affected by regulation of elections." *In re Amendment of the Code of Judicial Conduct*, No. C4-85-697, slip op. at 4 (Minn. Sept. 14, 2004). Where "constitutionally protected interests lie on both sides of the legal equation," *Nixon v. Shrink Mo. Gov't PAC*, 528 U.S. 377, 400, 120 S.Ct. 897, 145 L. Ed. 2d 886 (2000) (Breyer, J., concurring), adoption of an only partly effective regulation may simply be the result of an unavoidable necessity to accommodate conflicting constitutional mandates.

Finally, this is a case in which the parameters of the evil addressed cannot be outlined with a high degree of precision. The difficulty is that the threat to the governmental interest is not from unambiguously evil conduct, but from behavior that forms part of a continuum with desired behavior—attempts of the citizenry to make their voices heard in their government. The critical and difficult question posed by this case is that the danger to judicial neutrality comes from that sometimes salutary behavior, at the point at which participation in the democratic process becomes undue influence over judicial decisionmaking, preventing a judge from acting as the law's representative, rather than as the representative of a political patron or donor. That point will vary from candidate to candidate, according to whether he or she is stubborn or persuadable, experienced or naive, young or old, poor or independently wealthy, ambitious or modest. No law can account for all these imponderables without restricting some candidate who would not have been swayed by temptation or leaving some candidate at liberty to compromise himself.

The Supreme Court acknowledged the same problem in the context of political contribution and expenditure restrictions. The use of money to influence elections and hence, government policy, is not simply either wholesome activism or influence-buying—the same action can partake

of both, which is why someone has to decide when a contribution or expenditure goes from being civic activism to a bid for undue influence. For that reason, the Supreme Court has said that regulation of political contributions and expenditures can go beyond forbidding outright bribery to regulation of more subtle forms of conduct that pose the same kind of threat, but in a lesser degree or in a more ambiguous form. This was debated in *McConnell*, where the dissenters contended that bribery laws ought to be enough to protect the government's anti-corruption interest, *see* 540 U.S. at 266, 124 S.Ct. 619 (Thomas, J., concurring and dissenting) and 540 U.S. at 258, 124 S.Ct. 619 (Scalia, J., concurring and dissenting) and 540 U.S. at 292-98, 124 S.Ct. 619 (Kennedy J., concurring and dissenting), but the Court's opinion held that the anti-corruption interest "extends beyond simple cash-for-votes corruption to curbing 'undue influence on an officeholder's judgment,'" 540 U.S. at 150, 124 S.Ct. 619. When Congress grapples with such a protean concept as "undue influence on an officeholder," the Supreme Court applies strict scrutiny in such a way as to acknowledge that Congress' task requires exercise of some judgment. In contrast to the Supreme Court's approach, our Court today takes a bludgeon to a state's attempt to solve a delicate problem.

IV.

The futility of requiring unattainable precision is illustrated by our Court's treatment of the solicitation clause. The basic scheme of the solicitation clause is to erect the campaign committees as a barrier between the candidate and contributor. As recently as 2002, all but four of the states that had judicial elections prohibited candidates from personally soliciting campaign contributions. Roy Schotland, *Myth, Reality, Past and Present, and Judicial Elections*, 35 Ind. L. Rev. 659, 666 (2002). (Since *White*, several

states have amended their rules.[24]). The Court today seems to implicitly approve the concept of the campaign commit-

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[24] Twenty-four states currently prohibit personal solicitation, while six states allow it. The states that now prohibit personal solicitation by the candidate are: Arizona, Ariz. Rule 81, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5B(2); Arkansas, Ark. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2); Florida, Fla. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7C.(1); Idaho, Id. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2) (may not solicit "in person"); Illinois, Ill. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7B(2); Indiana, Ind. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2); Kansas, Kan. S.Ct. Rule 601, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7B(2)(c); Kentucky, Ky. Rule 4.300, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5B(2); Louisiana, La. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7D(1); Michigan, Mich. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7B(2); Minnesota, Minn. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5B(2); Mississippi, Miss. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2); Missouri, Mo. S.Ct. Rule 2.03, Canon 5B(2); New York, N.Y. Judiciary Law, Book 29 App., Canon 5A(5); North Dakota, N.D. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2); Ohio, Ohio Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7(C)(2)(a); Oklahoma, Okla. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2); Oregon, Ore. Code of Jud. Cond. R.4-102(D); Pennsylvania, 42 Pa. Cons. Stat. Ann., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7(B)(2); South Dakota, S.D. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2); Tennessee, Tenn. S.Ct. Rules, Rule 10, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2)(a); Washington, Wash. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7B(2); West Virginia, W. Va. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2); and Wisconsin, Wis. S.Ct. Rule 60.06(4).

States that permit personal solicitation are: California, Cal. Code of Jud. Ethics, Canon 5 (comment.); Georgia, Ga. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7B(2) (amended to comply with *Weaver v. Bonner*, 309 F.3d 1312 (11th Cir. 2002)); Maryland, Md. Rules 16-813, Canon 5 (rescinded effective July 1, 2005); Montana, Mont. Canons of Jud. Ethics; Nevada, Nev. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2); New Mexico, N.M. Code of Jud. Cond. R. 21-800B and F (candidates may solicit but not from attorneys or litigants with cases pending before the candidate); North Carolina, N.C. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7(B)(4) (amended in response to *White*, *see* Matthew Eisley, *Election Rules Relaxed for Judges: Permission to Solicit Lawyers for Money Brings a Fear of 'Shakedowns'*, 26 Nat'l L.J. No. 7 (Oct. 13, 2003)); and Texas, Tex. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 4D(1). Alabama adopted a rule in 2004 that does not prohibit but "strongly discourages" personal solicitation. Ala. Canons of Jud. Ethics, Canon 7B(4).

tee as a barrier between contributors and the judge or would-be judge. Yet, in effectuating the concept, there are necessarily details which could be moved an inch one way or another. It is clear that for the candidate to sign letters himself is one way to hack at the wall between the candidate and contributor—presumably, that is why Wersal wants to do it. It is perhaps true that the entire wall would not fall down, but it would be somewhat less effective in achieving the goal of removing personal obligation from the candidate-contributor relation. If each detail of the scheme must be proved as critical, rather than as forming a part of a scheme that works, then each detail, and therefore the scheme as a whole, is foredoomed.

Moreover, while the Court's ruling today seems to attack only one small aspect of the solicitation-restriction scheme, the ruling contains the seeds to strike the whole scheme. Today Wersal asks only to sign solicitation letters himself and to personally ask for money from large groups. However, the Court states that any candidate can flank the campaign committee's confidentiality obligation simply by looking up public records showing who contributed to whom. In light of the Court's underinclusiveness analysis, this reasoning will likely require us to condemn the entire scheme as soon as the next plaintiff asks us to.

In sum, though strict scrutiny must, of course, be strict, it must, at least in some instances, be applied with limited deference to the decisionmaker's exercise of judgment. If we pretend that it is otherwise, we adopt a model for strict scrutiny under which no state's attempt to deal with certain problems can survive, and so very real and dangerous problems must be left unaddressed. Every place where the line is drawn is arguably either overinclusive, because too much activism is restricted, or underinclusive, because too much threat to judicial open-mindedness is tolerated. The courts then occupy the enviable position of not being required to say in advance what line would be permissible,

but of being privileged to veto every possible legislative attempt to draw the line because it would have been possible to draw the line somewhere else. If strict scrutiny is simply a way to strike down laws, in which any law is doomed as soon as we invoke strict scrutiny, it is a charade. That is not how the Supreme Court has applied strict scrutiny,[25] nor should we adopt this flawed methodology in our Circuit. Instead, where the states or other branches draw the line in a place which the governmental actor can defend, with convincing evidence, as the place where the threat to its interest becomes the most acute, the measure should pass strict scrutiny, though it might have been possible for another hypothetical decisionmaker to have moved the line an inch in one direction or another.

V.

There can be no question that the interests at stake here are compelling. There are questions of fact—first, as to whether the threat to those interests posed by partisan involvement in judicial elections and personal solicitation of contributions are severe enough to warrant the measures taken by the Minnesota Supreme Court and second, as to whether the particular remedy chosen was truly selected for the asserted reason. I would remand to the district court for trial of these factual questions in light of new evidence of the Minnesota Supreme Court's most recent deliberations on the subject. If the defendants prove by convincing evidence that the threat was as they assert and that the clauses were adopted to remedy that threat, I believe the clauses should be upheld as constitutional. Today's ruling invalidates Minnesota's current attempts to preserve its courts' integrity and public repute without any evidence having been heard on the most recent rule amendments. At the same time, our ruling in effect dooms

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[25] "Strict scrutiny is not 'strict in theory but fatal in fact.'" *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. at 326, 123 S.Ct. 2325.

any future attempt as well by adopting a form of strict scrutiny that no measure will pass. I therefore respectfully dissent.

APPENDIX B

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE EIGHTH CIRCUIT

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, ET AL.,
APPELLANTS,

v.

BARRY M. LAZARUS, ET AL.,
APPELLEES,

NOS. 99-4021, 99-4025, 99-4029

May 25, 2004

APPEAL FROM THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MINNESOTA

The pending petitions for rehearing en banc are granted, and the court's March 16, 2004, opinion and judgment are vacated. The clerk is directed to set the matter for oral argument before the court en banc during the week of October 18-22, 2004, in St. Paul, Minnesota. The clerk will notify counsel of the date and time of argument when the October calendar is established.

The parties are directed to forward to the clerk twenty-five copies of the supplemental briefs filed pursuant to court's order of October 8, 2002.

Order entered at the Direction of the Court
Clerk, U.S. Court of Appeals, Eighth Circuit

APPENDIX C

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE EIGHTH CIRCUIT

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; INDIAN ASIAN AMERICAN REPUBLICANS OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; REPUBLICAN SENIORS, AN ASSOCIATION; YOUNG REPUBLICAN LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA, A MINNESOTA NONPROFIT CORPORATION; MINNESOTA COLLEGE REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION,

PLAINTIFFS—APPELLANTS,

GREGORY F. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFF,

CHERYL L. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; MARK E. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; CORWIN C. HULBERT, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFFS—APPELLANTS,

CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE, AN ASSOCIATION,

PLAINTIFF,

MINNESOTA AFRICAN AMERICAN REPUBLIC COUNCIL, AN ASSOCIATION,

PLAINTIFF—APPELLANT,

MUSLIM REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION; MICHAEL MAXIM, INDIVIDUALLY; KEVIN J. KOLOSKY, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFFS,

V.

SUZANNE WHITE, IN HER CAPACITY AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE MINNESOTA BOARD OF JUDICIAL STANDARDS, OR HER SUCCESSOR; EDWARD J. CLEARY, IN HIS CAPACITY AS DIRECTOR OF THE MINNESOTA OFFICE OF LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, OR HIS SUCCESSOR; CHARLES E. LUNDBERG, IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIR OF THE MINNESOTA LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BOARD, OR HIS SUCCESSOR,

DEFENDANTS—APPELLEES,

MINNESOTA CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION, AMICUS ON BEHALF OF APPELLANT,

THE MINNESOTA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION, AMICUS ON BEHALF OF APPELLEE.

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; INDIAN ASIAN AMERICAN REPUBLICANS OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; REPUBLICAN SENIORS, AN ASSOCIATION; YOUNG REPUBLICAN LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA, A MINNESOTA NONPROFIT CORPORATION; MINNESOTA COLLEGE REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION; MINNESOTA AFRICAN AMERICAN REPUBLIC COUNCIL, AN ASSOCIATION; CHERYL L. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; MARK E. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; CORWIN C. HULBERT, INDIVIDUALLY; GREGORY F. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE, AN ASSOCIATION; MUSLIM REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION,

PLAINTIFFS,

MICHAEL MAXIM, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFF—APPELLANT,

KEVIN J. KOLOSKY, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFF,

V.

SUZANNE WHITE, IN HER CAPACITY AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE MINNESOTA BOARD OF JUDICIAL STANDARDS, OR HER SUCCESSOR; EDWARD J. CLEARY, IN HIS CAPACITY AS DIRECTOR OF THE MINNESOTA OFFICE OF LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, OR HIS SUCCESSOR; CHARLES E. LUNDBERG, IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIR OF THE MINNESOTA LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BOARD, OR HIS SUCCESSOR,

DEFENDANTS—APPELLEES.

THE MINNESOTA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION, AMICUS ON BEHALF OF APPELLEE.

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; INDIAN ASIAN AMERICAN REPUBLICANS OF MINNESOTA, AN

ASSOCIATION; REPUBLICAN SENIORS, AN ASSOCIATION; YOUNG REPUBLICAN LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA, A MINNESOTA NONPROFIT CORPORATION; MINNESOTA COLLEGE REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION,

PLAINTIFFS,

GREGORY F. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFF—APPELLANT,

CHERYL L. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; MARK E. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; CORWIN C. HULBERT, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFFS,

CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE, AN ASSOCIATION,

PLAINTIFF—APPELLANT,

MINNESOTA AFRICAN AMERICAN REPUBLIC COUNCIL, AN ASSOCIATION; MUSLIM REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION; MICHAEL MAXIM, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFFS,

KEVIN J. KOLOSKY, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFF—APPELLANT,

V.

SUZANNE WHITE, IN HER CAPACITY AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE MINNESOTA BOARD OF JUDICIAL STANDARDS, OR HER SUCCESSOR; EDWARD J. CLEARY, IN HIS CAPACITY AS DIRECTOR OF THE MINNESOTA OFFICE OF LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, OR HIS SUCCESSOR; CHARLES E. LUNDBERG, IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIR OF THE MINNESOTA LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BOARD, OR HIS SUCCESSOR,

DEFENDANTS—APPELLEES,

THE MINNESOTA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION, AMICUS ON BEHALF OF APPELLANTS.

No. 99-4021, 99-4025, 99-4029

Submitted: Dec. 10, 2002
Filed: March 16, 2004

Before McMILLIAN, JOHN R. GIBSON, and BEAM, Circuit Judges.

JOHN R. GIBSON, Circuit Judge.

In *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 536 U.S. 765, 122 S.Ct. 2528, 153 L. Ed. 2d 694 (2002), the Supreme Court reversed the grant of summary judgment against Gregory Wersal and the other plaintiffs in this suit on their claim that the "announce" clause of Canon 5 of the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct violated their First Amendment rights. The Supreme Court remanded to us for further proceedings consistent with its opinion, *Id.* at 788, 122 S.Ct. 2528. We conclude that the Supreme Court's opinion requires us to remand to the district court for entry of judgment in favor of Wersal and the other plaintiffs on their "announce" clause claim. We remand to the district court for consideration of whether its disposition of the plaintiffs' claims based on restriction of partisan activities is consistent with the Supreme Court's opinion. Finally, we remand to the district court for entry of judgment in favor of Suzanne White and the other defendants on plaintiffs' personal solicitation clause claim.

We stated the facts of this case in our earlier opinion, *Republican Party of Minnesota v. Kelly*, 247 F.3d 854 (8th Cir. 2001), and need not belabor them here, except to say that Wersal was a candidate for election to the Minnesota Supreme Court, who challenged several provisions of Canon 5. Canon 5 prohibits candidates for judicial office

from announcing their views on disputed legal and political issues, from engaging in specific partisan political activities, and from personally soliciting campaign contributions. Wersal, together with other plaintiffs associated with his campaign[1] and the state Republican party and affiliated organizations,[2] filed this suit against the Minnesota Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board[3] and the Minnesota Board of Judicial Standards[4] to enjoin enforcement of Canon 5. The district court granted summary judgment to the Lawyers Board and the Judicial Board, holding that each challenged provision of Canon 5 survived First Amendment scrutiny. *Republican Party of Minn. v. Kelly*, 63 F. Supp. 2d 967 (D. Minn. 1999). Wersal and the other plaintiffs appealed.

We affirmed the district court with regard to each of the challenged provisions of Canon 5. 247 F.3d at 885. We subjected the provisions of Canon 5 to strict scrutiny, asking whether the restrictions were narrowly tailored to

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[1] Other plaintiffs associated with Wersal were his campaign committee and Republican Party members Cheryl Wersal, Mark Wersal, and Corwin Hulbert. Later, Michael Maxim, who was also a member of the Minnesota Republican Party, and Kevin Kolosky, who was another candidate for judicial office, joined as plaintiffs.

[2] The affiliated organizations were the Indian Asian American Republicans, the Republican Seniors, the Young Republicans League of Minnesota, and the Minnesota College Republicans. The Minnesota African American Republican Council and the Muslim Republicans were later added as plaintiffs.

[3] Named as defendants were the Director of the Minnesota Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility and the Chair of the Minnesota Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board. The Professional Responsibility Board supervises the Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility, which investigates and prosecutes ethical violations by lawyer candidates for judicial office.

[4] The actual defendant named was the Chairperson of the Minnesota Board of Judicial Standards. The Board of Judicial Standards enforces the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct against judges.

serve a compelling state interest. *Id.* at 864. We held that the state had compelling interests in protecting the independence and quality of its judiciary, and in preserving public confidence in the judiciary's independence. *Id.* at 864-68. We held that the state had shown the required quantum of evidence that each of those interests was threatened by the practices that Canon 5 regulated. *Id.* at 868-72 (partisan activity restrictions); 876-81 (announce clause); 883-84 (solicitation restrictions). We then held that each of the challenged restrictions was narrowly tailored to serve the interests of judicial independence and quality. *Id.* at 872-76 (partisan activity restrictions); 881-83 (announce clause); 884-85 (solicitation restrictions).

Wersal and the other plaintiffs filed a petition for certiorari presenting three questions:

> 1. Whether the provision of the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct that prohibits a candidate for elective judicial office from "announc[ing] his or her views on disputed legal or political issues" unconstitutionally impinges on the freedom of speech as guaranteed by the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution.
>
> 2. Whether the severe burdens imposed by various provisions of the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct unconstitutionally impinge on the right of political parties to endorse candidates for elective judicial office in violation of the freedom of speech, freedom of association, and equal protection of law as guaranteed by the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution.
>
> 3. Whether the provision of the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct that forbids a candidate for elective judicial office from attending or speaking at any political party gathering—while permitting such a candidate to attend or speak at gatherings of all other

> organizations—unconstitutionally impinges on the freedom of speech, freedom of association, and equal protection of the law as guaranteed by the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution.

The petition did not include a question relating to the solicitation restrictions. The Supreme Court granted certiorari, limited to the first question presented, the challenge to the announce clause.

Justice Scalia's opinion for the Supreme Court asked first whether the Boards had identified a compelling state interest to be served by the announce clause. 536 U.S. at 775-84, 122 S.Ct. 2528. Justice Scalia considered the terms "judicial independence" and "impartiality" to be insufficiently refined, and he divined three distinct meanings for "impartiality." First, the "root meaning" of impartiality "is the lack of bias for or against either *party* to the proceeding." *Id.* at 775, 122 S.Ct. 2528 (emphasis in original). Although Justice Scalia implicitly approved this meaning of impartiality as a compelling state interest, he concluded that the announce clause was not narrowly tailored to serve that interest and in fact was "barely tailored to serve that interest *at all*, inasmuch as it does not restrict speech for or against particular *parties*, but rather speech for or against particular *issues*." *Id.* at 776, 122 S.Ct. 2528 (emphasis in original).

The second possible meaning of impartiality was "lack of preconception in favor of or against a particular *legal view*." *Id.* at 777, 122 S.Ct. 2528 (emphasis in original). Justice Scalia not only rejected this concept as a compelling state interest, but he considered this sort of impartiality undesirable in a judge. *Id.* ("avoiding judicial preconceptions on legal issues is neither possible nor desirable"). As defined by Justice Scalia, this second meaning of impartiality refers not to a candidate's public actions, but to his or her thoughts. An important point that is not explicit in the Su-

preme Court opinion is that a restriction on a judicial candidate's speech would be patently ineffective in regulating the candidate's thoughts, even if the state wanted to do so.

The third possible meaning of impartiality was "open-mindedness" or willingness to consider all arguments. "This sort of impartiality seeks to guarantee each litigant, not an *equal* chance to win the legal points in the case, but at least *some* chance of doing so." *Id.* (emphasis in original). This "open-mindedness" meaning of impartiality appears to be intimately related to the second meaning, lack of preconceptions; whereas the second meaning refers to the judge's view of the substantive issue, the third meaning refers to the judge's attitude toward reconsidering his or her view of the substantive issue. Justice Scalia reserved judgment on whether this third sort of impartiality in a judicial candidate was desirable (not to mention compelling) because he considered the announce clause to be so ineffective a way to achieve "open-mindedness" that this could not have been the state's purpose in adopting the clause. *Id.* at 780, 122 S.Ct. 2528 ("As a means of pursuing the objective of open-mindedness that respondents now articulate, the announce clause is so woefully underinclusive as to render belief in that purpose a challenge to the credulous.").

Having rejected the state interests offered by the Boards to justify Canon 5, the Court held: "The Minnesota Supreme Court's canon of judicial conduct prohibiting candidates for judicial election from announcing their views on disputed legal and political issues violates the First Amendment. Accordingly, we reverse the grant of summary judgment to respondents and remand the case for proceedings consistent with this opinion." *Id.* at 788, 122 S.Ct. 2528.

The first issue we must decide is what instructions to issue with regard to the announce clause. Then, we must decide whether to instruct the district court to reconsider

its grant of summary judgment with regard to the partisan activity and solicitation clauses.

I.

The Supreme Court's reversal of the grant of summary judgment for the defendants on the announce clause issue technically leaves open the question of what to do with the plaintiffs' cross-motion for summary judgment. The plaintiffs ask us to remand with instructions to enter judgment for them, and the Boards do not dispute the propriety of this request. Therefore, the district court should enter judgment for the plaintiffs on Count II of their Second Amended Complaint.

II.

Wersal and the other plaintiffs also ask us to reverse the entry of judgment for the Boards and to order entry of judgment in favor of the plaintiffs on the other four counts of their complaint, none of which were before the Supreme Court. The Boards argue that we do not have jurisdiction over the issues as to which the plaintiffs did not seek certiorari (solicitation clause) or as to which the Supreme Court denied certiorari (partisan activity clauses).

When the Supreme Court remands a case to us, we must determine whether the law of the case doctrine applies to issues the Supreme Court did not decide. *See Madison v. IBP, Inc.*, 330 F.3d 1051, 1059 (8th Cir. 2003). The law of the case doctrine dictates that "when a court decides upon a rule of law, that decision should continue to govern the same issues in subsequent stages in the same case." *Kinman v. Omaha Pub. Sch. Dist.*, 171 F.3d 607, 610 (8th Cir. 1999) (quotation marks omitted). The doctrine does not apply "when an intervening decision from a superior tribunal clearly demonstrates the law of the case is wrong." *Id.* (quotation marks omitted); *Madison*, 330 F.3d at 1059; *Morris v. American Nat'l Can Corp.*, 988 F.2d 50, 52 (8th Cir. 1993). Where the Supreme Court's reasoning in dis-

posing of one issue in a case affects the validity of our earlier disposition of other issues in the same case, we will reconsider those issues on remand.[5] *See Shrink Missouri Gov't PAC v. Adams*, 204 F.3d 838, 840 (8th Cir. 2000). The law of the case doctrine is discretionary, not jurisdictional. *Arizona v. California*, 460 U.S. 605, 618, 103 S.Ct. 1382, 75 L. Ed. 2d 318 (1983) ("Law of the case directs a court's discretion, it does not limit the tribunal's power."); *Conrod v. Davis*, 120 F.3d 92, 95 (8th Cir. 1997).

The cases the Boards cite to show we lack power to reconsider the partisan activity and solicitation clauses are inapposite. In *Patterson v. City of Newport News*, 364 F.2d 816, 817-18 (4th Cir. 1966), plaintiffs sought to relitigate in federal court a condemnation that had been litigated to final judgment in state court. This was barred as a matter of issue preclusion, not law of the case. In *Fleming v. Lake Delton Dev. Co.*, 267 F.2d 254, 256 (7th Cir. 1959), the court did not decide whether res judicata or law of the case ap-

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[5] The dissent argues that we err in taking into consideration the law of the case doctrine in determining the disposition of issues as to which the Supreme Court did not grant certiorari and which are not discussed in the Supreme Court's opinion in *White*. In our opinion, we conclude that we must reconsider those issues to determine if the reasoning of our earlier disposition survives the new Supreme Court decision. The dissent takes exception to the words "clearly demonstrates the law of the case is wrong," (quoted in *Madison*, 330 F.3d at 1059). This phrase does not insulate a purely legal question from de novo review. The word "clearly" in this context does not refer to "clear error" review, which applies to questions of fact, *Anderson v. City of Bessemer City*, 470 U.S. 564, 573, 105 S.Ct. 1504, 84 L. Ed. 2d 518 (1985), but to whether the new decision actually has a bearing on other issues in this case that were not directly addressed by the superior tribunal. We do not "defer" to our earlier opinion, as the dissent contends. Where the Supreme Court's reasoning casts doubt on our earlier conclusions, we revisit them, see section IV, *infra*; where the earlier reasoning is not inconsistent with *White*, there is no reason to alter it, see section V, *infra*.

plied, but declined to reconsider the same arguments and the same issues the appellant had already fully litigated. There was no suggestion that the law had changed between the first disposition and the later appeal, as the plaintiffs argue happened in this case.

The Boards also argue that the Supreme Court's remand limited our jurisdiction, citing *Hermann v. Brownell*, 274 F.2d 842, 843 (9th Cir. 1960). *Hermann* "stands only for the proposition that upon remand the jurisdiction of an appellate court is limited to those particularized points which were assigned for consideration, *if the mandate was in that form.*" *Sanders v. John Nuveen & Co.*, 554 F.2d 790, 793-94 (7th Cir. 1977) (emphasis added). When a remand does not contain such a limitation, "[o]ther issues not within the compass of the mandate are thereby not precluded from consideration." *Id.* at 794. The remand in this case stated:

> The Minnesota Supreme Court's canon of judicial conduct prohibiting candidates for judicial election from announcing their views on disputed legal and political issues violates the First Amendment. Accordingly, we reverse the grant of summary judgment to respondents and remand the case for proceedings consistent with this opinion.

536 U.S. at 788, 122 S.Ct. 2528. This is the language of a general remand, *Field v. Mans*, 157 F.3d 35, 42 (1st Cir. 1998), and it does not contain an express or implicit limitation on our jurisdiction of issues that were before us prior to the grant of certiorari, *id.*

The question before us, then, is whether the Supreme Court's decision demonstrates that the law applied by this court or by the district court in deciding the partisan activity or solicitation clause issues was wrong.

III.

In our examination of the partisan activity restrictions, we did not suppose that the restrictions were meant to avoid judicial bias for or against particular parties to the suit, as for instance, if the Republican Party were an actual party to litigation before a judge who was endorsed by the Party or who had announced membership in the Party during his election campaign. Recusal of the judge in such a situation is an obvious less restrictive alternative. Therefore, it does not appear that the partisan activity restrictions would be narrowly tailored to avoid impartiality in Justice Scalia's first sense of the word.

Nor did we, in our earlier opinion, consider whether the partisan activity restrictions tended to avoid election of judges who harbored preconceptions about legal issues and to encourage election of judges whose brains were a *tabula rasa* devoid of experience or opinion. Therefore, we did not base our decision upon vindication of the state's interest in impartiality in Justice Scalia's second sense of the word.

Instead, we focused on what we can now recognize as impartiality in Justice Scalia's third sense of the word: open-mindedness. Moreover, we focused not on lack of open-mindedness in the sense of obstinacy or dogmatism, which are subjective states of mind, but rather on the objectively ascertainable threat to open-mindedness that results from having incurred obligations to entities who, while not actually parties to a case, have made known their desire to see certain cases decided in certain ways. Throughout our discussion of the restrictions on partisan activities, we stressed the possibility that candidates who became indebted to political parties could be or seem to be bound to rule in accord with those parties' platforms, rather than in accord with the record and the law.[6] *See, e.g.*, 247

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[6] Our focus on the effect of a candidate's obligation to and dependence on a political party explains why we arrive at a different result

F.3d at 870 (citing concurrence in *Moon v. Halverson*, 206 Minn. 331, 288 N.W. 579, 581 (Minn. 1939), deploring "accusations of party treason which have been heaped upon some judges in the recent past because of decisions thought to be contrary to the interests of an indorsing party"); 247 F.3d at 872 ("The Minnesota Supreme Court has attempted to prevent judicial candidates from incurring, or seeming to incur, debts to political parties that could compromise their

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than the Northern District of New York, which recently invalidated a portion of the New York Code of Judicial Conduct that prohibited judicial candidates from participating in partisan political activity except for their own campaigns. *Spargo v. New York State Comm'n on Judicial Conduct*, 244 F. Supp. 2d 72 (N.D.N.Y. 2003), *vacated for abstention*, 351 F.3d 65 (2d Cir. 2003). That court opined: "The only conceivable connection [between the prohibition and judicial independence] would be that engaging in political activity, whether partisan or nonpartisan, would influence a judge's decision toward or against the view espoused, whether it be on an issue of law or as to a party to a proceeding." *Id.* at 88. Although *Spargo*'s reasoning is quite brief, it appears to conclude that the only possible interests served by the code sections are either lack of preconceptions as to issues of law, which the Supreme Court disapproved in *White*, or lack of bias as to a party, which could be better addressed by recusal. *Id.* at 88-89. This reasoning ignores the threat to the interest in open-mindedness resulting from the reality or the appearance of obligation to and dependence on political parties. *Spargo* may have omitted discussion of this interest because New York, unlike Minnesota, has partisan judicial elections, N.Y. Election Law § 6-106 (McKinney 2003), and one could argue that it makes little sense to prohibit partisan political activity by judicial candidates where the State has chosen to tolerate partisan judicial elections. Minnesota, in contrast, has chosen to make its judicial elections nonpartisan, thus demonstrating its concern with the effect of political parties on judicial impartiality. *See Peterson v. Stafford*, 490 N.W.2d 418, 422 (Minn. 1992).

The New York Court of Appeals disagreed with *Spargo* and upheld the New York restrictions on political activity by judicial candidates as narrowly tailored to serve compelling state interests. *In the Matter of Raab*, 100 N.Y.2d 305, 763 N.Y.S.2d 213, 793 N.E.2d 1287, 1292-93 (2003).

independence. . . ."); *id.* at 876 ("If the judiciary is then expected to review . . . legislation neutrally, a State may conclude that it is crucial that the judges not be beholden to a party responsible for enactment of the legislation, or to one that opposed it."); *id.* (Political parties "are simply in a better position than other organizations to hold a candidate in thrall."). In its most extreme form, this kind of threat to open-mindedness goes by the name "bribery," which, of course, is forbidden by laws other than Canon 5, and is unquestionably within the state's power to proscribe. We do not mean to suggest that political endorsements are comparable to the payment of money or could be regulated in the same way. However, the underlying problem of candidates for public office incurring obligations which interfere with their performance in office has been recognized as an urgent threat that governments can remedy, even when the problem takes more subtle forms than bribery. *See McConnell v. FEC*, 540 U.S. 93, — - —, 124 S.Ct. 619, 660-61, 157 L. Ed. 2d 491 (2003) (corruption and appearance of corruption extend beyond bribery to other arrangements which create "sense of obligation" in officeholders); *Nixon v. Shrink Missouri Gov't PAC*, 528 U.S. 377, 389, 120 S.Ct. 897, 145 L. Ed. 2d 886 (2000) ("In speaking of 'improper influence' and 'opportunities for abuse' in addition to 'quid pro quo arrangements,' we recognized a concern not confined to bribery of public officials, but extending to the broader threat from politicians too compliant with the wishes of large contributors. These were the obvious points behind our recognition that the Congress could constitutionally address the power of money to 'influence governmental action' in ways less 'blatant and specific' than bribery."); *see also United States Civil Serv. Comm'n v. National Ass'n of Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. 548, 565, 93 S.Ct. 2880, 37 L. Ed. 2d 796 (1973) (upholding restraints on executive branch employees' political activities because such activities posed "hazards to fair and effective

government."). The partisan activity restrictions of Canon 5 are aimed at forms of obligation which are more subtle than outright corruption, but which the state still has a compelling interest in avoiding in its judiciary.

The Supreme Court left open the possibility that open-mindedness in judicial candidates might be a compelling state interest, so a decision premised upon such an interest has not been shown to be wrong, *see Kinman*, 171 F.3d at 610. After the decision in *White*, the New York Court of Appeals entertained a First Amendment challenge to a section of its Rules Governing Judicial Conduct that prohibited judicial candidates from making certain pledges and promises about their future conduct in office. The New York court applied strict scrutiny and upheld the section based, in part, on New York's compelling interest in open-mindedness. *In re Watson*, 100 N.Y.2d 290, 763 N.Y.S.2d 219, 794 N.E.2d 1, 7 (N.Y. 2003) (per curiam) ("[O]pen-mindedness is central to the judicial function for it ensures that each litigant appearing in court has a genuine—as opposed to illusory—opportunity to be heard.")

Although an analysis based on the compelling interest in judicial open-mindedness is not contrary to *White*, another aspect of our analysis of the partisan activity clauses must be reexamined carefully. The Supreme Court held that the announce clause would have been a "woefully under-inclusive" method of achieving the goal of electing open-minded judges, and so the announce clause could not be said to be narrowly tailored to serve this goal. 536 U.S. at 780, 122 S.Ct. 2528. It therefore behooves us to look closely at whether the partisan activity clauses are similarly underinclusive.

Our earlier opinion's discussion of the partisan activity clauses, unlike our discussion of the announce clause, specifically addressed the issue of underinclusiveness in a dialogue with the dissent. *Compare* 247 F.3d at 871-72 *with* 247 F.3d at 899-902. The dissent contended that, because

Canon 5 prohibited a candidate from participating in the three specified activities with political parties, but not with other organizations that took an interest in how a candidate would decide certain cases if elected, Canon 5 was fatally underinclusive. 247 F.3d at 900-01. We responded that underinclusiveness is not a ground in its own right for invalidating a law, but that it frequently points to two other defects that are fatal: underinclusiveness may show that the government's interest is not truly compelling, since the government has chosen to leave unchecked a threat to that interest; or else it may show that the government is discriminating on the basis of content, suppressing disfavored speech, while allowing other, favored speech even though it ought to be subject to the same objection as the prohibited speech. 247 F.3d at 871 (citing *City of Ladue v. Gilleo*, 512 U.S. 43, 51-53, 114 S.Ct. 2038, 129 L. Ed. 2d 36 (1994)). To disprove the existence of this first defect, the government defending a law must "establish the empirical reality of the problems it purports to be addressing." 247 F.3d at 871 (quoting *Glickman v. Wileman Bros. & Elliott, Inc.*, 521 U.S. 457, 493, 117 S.Ct. 2130, 138 L. Ed. 2d 585 (1997) (Souter, J., dissenting)); *see generally Interactive Digital Software v. St. Louis County*, 329 F.3d 954, 959 (8th Cir. 2003) (For measure to pass strict scrutiny. government defending measure must present substantial supporting evidence of harm.).

To disprove the possibility of content discrimination, the government must show that the speech it has burdened poses a different, more serious threat to its asserted interest than the speech it chose not to regulate. *See Erznoznik v. City of Jacksonville*, 422 U.S. 205, 215, 95 S.Ct. 2268, 45 L. Ed. 2d 125 (1975) ("[E]ven a traffic regulation cannot discriminate on the basis of content unless there are clear reasons for the distinctions."). For instance, in *Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce*, 494 U.S. 652, 110 S.Ct. 1391, 108 L. Ed. 2d 652 (1990), Michigan

restricted the political expenditures of corporations in support of or opposition to candidates for state office. The compelling interest for such regulation was the concern that entities that amassed wealth in the economic marketplace would parlay that wealth into "unfair advantage in the political marketplace," 494 U.S. at 670, 110 S.Ct. 1391 (Brennan, J., concurring) because their ability to spend corporate money bore no relation to political support for the ideas the corporations spent their money to promote, *id.* at 659-60, 670, 672, 110 S.Ct. 1391. The Chamber of Commerce attacked the Michigan law as underinclusive because it did not regulate expenditures by unincorporated labor unions, which also amassed political war chests. *Id.* at 665, 110 S.Ct. 1391. The Court noted that federal law restricted expenditures by unions, as well as by corporations, *id.* at 665 n. 4, 110 S.Ct. 1391.[7]

Austin rejected the underinclusiveness challenge, reasoning that the corporations enjoyed greater government-conferred legal advantages enhancing their ability to accumulate wealth. 494 U.S. at 665, 110 S.Ct. 1391. These legal advantages of corporate form made a crucial distinction between corporations and unions. Additionally, case law permitted union members to opt out of contributing to the union's political activities, which meant that "the funds

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[7] The Court had discussed in earlier cases a long history of Congressional attempts to address the "war chest" problem posed by corporations and labor unions. *See FEC v. Nat'l Right to Work Comm.*, 459 U.S. 197, 208-09, 103 S.Ct. 552, 74 L. Ed. 2d 364 (1982) (Federal laws accounting for "particular legal and economic attributes of corporations and labor organizations" reflect "a permissible assessment of the dangers posed by those entities to the electoral process."); *accord FEC v. Beaumont*, 539 U.S. 146, 123 S.Ct. 2200, 2206, 156 L. Ed. 2d 179 (2003) (including labor unions in discussion of policies behind regulating corporate campaign contributions); *McConnell v. FEC*, 540 U.S. 93, — - —, 124 S.Ct. 619, 644-45, 157 L. Ed. 2d 491 (2003) (same).

available for a union's political activities more accurately reflects members' support for the organization's political views than does a corporation's general treasury." *Id.* at 666, 110 S.Ct. 1391. The Michigan law therefore passed strict scrutiny. *Cf. Burson v. Freeman*, 504 U.S. 191, 207, 112 S.Ct. 1846, 119 L. Ed. 2d 5 (1992) (also upholding law on strict scrutiny review against underinclusiveness challenge that law failed to regulate all speech posing same threat; Court reasoned that only the type of speech subject to regulation had been shown to pose threat to compelling interest: "The First Amendment does not require States to regulate for problems that do not exist."); *Florida Star v. B.J.F.*, 491 U.S. 524, 541-42, 109 S.Ct. 2603, 105 L. Ed. 2d 443 (1989) (Scalia, J., concurring in judgment) (underinclusiveness fatal where unregulated speech would cause victim discomfort "at least as great" as that caused by speech that was banned).

Our analysis of the problem of underinclusiveness in applying strict scrutiny finds strong support in the Supreme Court's most recent campaign finance case, *McConnell v. FEC*, 540 U.S. 93, — - —, 124 S.Ct. 619, 694-98, 157 L. Ed. 2d 491 (2003). In *McConnell*, the Court considered a challenge to section 203 of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, which in turn amended section 316(b)(2) of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, to prohibit use of corporations' and unions' treasury funds to pay for election advertising. 540 U.S. at — & n. 87, 124 S.Ct. at 695 & n. 87. Because the provision restricted campaign expenditures, it had to be tested by strict scrutiny. *Id.* at 695 (asking whether "compelling governmental interest justifies" measure); *id.* at 766 (Kennedy, J., dissenting) ("All parties agree strict scrutiny applies [to section 203]."). The plaintiffs contended that the section was underinclusive because it did not apply to election advertising in the print media or on the Internet. *Id.* at 697. The Court held that the evidence in the case supported the

conclusion that television advertising posed the greater threat, and therefore the "record amply justifie[d] Congress' line drawing." *Id.* The Court said that "reform may take one step at a time, addressing itself to the phase of the problem which seems most acute to the legislative mind." *Id.* (quoting *Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1, 105, 96 S.Ct. 612, 46 L. Ed. 2d 659 (1976)). *McConnell* thus confirms our earlier reasoning that the sort of underinclusiveness that is fatal in strict scrutiny is irrational underinclusiveness, not underinclusiveness that results from attempting to focus the restriction on only the severest form of the threat to a compelling governmental interest.

Although our method of analyzing the underinclusiveness issue remains valid, we must examine whether the actual application was affected by anything in the *White* decision. The Supreme Court's discussion of the announce clause affected both the necessity and narrow tailoring aspects of our determination that the partisan activity clauses passed strict scrutiny. First, our determination that the Boards had shown the necessity of the restrictions depended partly on our view of the history of Minnesota's effort to extricate its judiciary from partisan pressures, initially by designating judicial elections as non-partisan, and later by adopting Codes of Judicial Conduct restricting partisan activities. 247 F.3d at 869-70. We concluded that "'a long history, a substantial consensus, and simple common sense' combine to show that regulation is necessary to protect the institution of the judiciary from the dangers of partisanship and corruption." *Id.* at 870-71 (quoting *Burson*, 504 U.S. at 211, 112 S.Ct. 1846). However, the Supreme Court rejected our reliance on similar considerations supporting the announce clause. 536 U.S. at 785, 122 S.Ct. 2528 ("The practice of prohibiting speech by judicial candidates on disputed issues, however, is neither long nor universal."). Moreover, the Court's discussion included language that has obvious relevance to the history of the

partisan activity clauses. *Id.* at 786, 122 S.Ct. 2528 ("Thus, not only were judicial candidates (including judges) discussing disputed legal and political issues on the campaign trail [throughout the 19th and first quarter of the 20th centuries], but they were touting party affiliations and angling for party nominations all the while."). Therefore, it is necessary to reconsider whether the partisan activities clauses are supported by sufficient evidence of necessity, without the reliance we placed on the history of Minnesota's efforts to protect its judiciary from partisan pressures.

Second, our conclusion that the Minnesota Supreme Court was justified in regulating candidate speech concerning political parties, while leaving unregulated comparable speech concerning single issue groups depended in part on the existence of the announce clause. 247 F.3d at 876 ("At the Minnesota Supreme Court's 1997 hearing on amending Canon 5, DePaul Willette, Executive Secretary of the Judicial Board, testified that the danger of judicial candidates affiliating with single-issue interest groups was adequately addressed by the provision of Canon 5 prohibiting announcement of the candidate's views on disputed legal or political issues."). Therefore, the evidence supporting Minnesota's distinction between political and other organizations must be reevaluated in light of the demise of the announce clause.

Third, our original underinclusiveness analysis discussed only whether the partisan activity restrictions were underinclusive because they reached speech pertaining to political parties, but not other organizations. We concluded the distinction between burdened speech and non-burdened speech was justified because political parties posed a more pervasive threat to judicial independence than did other types of organizations. 247 F.3d at 872, 875-76. *Cf. McConnell*, 540 U.S. at —, 124 S.Ct. at 686 ("Congress is fully entitled to consider the real-world differences between political parties and interest groups when crafting a system

of campaign finance regulation. Interest groups do not select slates of candidates for elections. Interest groups do not determine who will serve on legislative committees, elect congressional leadership, or organize legislative caucuses. Political parties have influence and power in the legislature that vastly exceeds that of any interest group.") (citation omitted).

The Supreme Court's opinion raised an entirely different underinclusiveness objection:

> The short of the matter is this: In Minnesota, a candidate for judicial office may not say "I think it is constitutional for the legislature to prohibit same-sex marriages." He may say the very same thing, however, up until the very day before he declares himself a candidate, and may say it repeatedly (until litigation is pending) after he is elected. As a means of pursuing the objective of open-mindedness that respondents now articulate, the announce clause is so woefully underinclusive as to render belief in that purpose a challenge to the credulous.

536 U.S. at 779, 122 S.Ct. 2528. This type of underinclusiveness analysis looks at whether banning certain communications within one time-frame but not another is arbitrary. The same analysis could be applied to other clauses of Canon 5, such as the party identification and attendance at party gatherings clauses. (The endorsement clause only makes sense during the time-frame of an election.) This particular underinclusiveness question was not briefed either before the district court or before us when we decided this case the first time. The plaintiffs ought not to be barred from making a new argument based on the intervening Supreme Court decision, *see Morris v. Am. Nat'l Can Corp.*, 988 F.2d at 52 (litigant who did not raise argument on first appeal "got lucky" when Supreme Court case changed law before its case became final), but neither should the Boards be prevented from marshaling

whatever evidence they choose to present on this issue, as they asked to do at oral argument on remand from the Supreme Court. We therefore remand to the district court to receive new evidence and to determine whether the partisan activity clauses can survive strict scrutiny in light of the Supreme Court's opinion.

IV.

The plaintiffs contended that the solicitation clause of Canon 5 was not narrowly tailored in that it unnecessarily prohibited candidates from soliciting contributions from large groups and sending out fund-raising letters over their own signatures. 247 F.3d at 883-84. We held that personal solicitation by candidates could create the impression that justice is for sale and Canon 5 left a candidate sufficient means by which to raise funds. *Id.* at 884-85. Plaintiffs did not seek certiorari on this issue. We conclude, however, that failure to seek certiorari on the issue does not now preclude the plaintiffs from asking for reconsideration of the issue in light of the Supreme Court's opinion. *See Morris v. American Nat'l Can Corp.*, 988 F.2d 50, 52 (8th Cir. 1993).

As with the partisan activities clauses, our consideration of Canon 5's restriction on personal solicitation was also premised on the state's interest in a kind of open-mindedness—keeping candidates free from obligations that would hamper their ability to decide the law according to their own judgment, rather than in accordance with implicit obligations to their financial benefactors. We said: "When judges obtain funds from a group that has an interest in the outcome of litigation, such as the plaintiffs' or defendants' bar, judges can appear beholden to that group for their accession to office, creating the expectation that the judges will favor their benefactors accordingly." 247 F.3d at 883. We cannot, then, say that our opinion was wrong in discerning a compelling state interest served by the personal solicitation restriction.

We considered whether the personal solicitation restriction was narrowly tailored in our original opinion. *Id.* at 884-85. Nothing in the Supreme Court's opinion discredits our analysis of this issue. *Cf. In re Dunleavy*, 838 A.2d 338, 350-51 (Me. 2003) (upholding restriction on judges' solicitation of support for political candidates after *White* as narrowly tailored), *pet'n for cert. filed* (Jan. 20, 2004) (No. 03-1132). Our holding on the issue is therefore not wrong. The plaintiffs cite the Eleventh Circuit's opinion in *Weaver v. Bonner*, 309 F.3d 1312, 1322-23 (11th Cir. 2002), invalidating Georgia Canon of Judicial Conduct 7(B)(2), which prohibited judicial candidates from personally soliciting campaign contributions. The Canon did allow the candidate's election committee to solicit funds. *Id.* at 1322. The Eleventh Circuit's holding on this issue was based on the fact that the Canon would not prevent the candidate from learning who had contributed to his campaign and consequently from feeling beholden to those contributors. Accordingly, it was ineffective in protecting the state's asserted compelling interest. Minnesota's Canon 5B(2), on the other hand, prohibits a candidate's campaign committee from disclosing to the candidate either the identity of campaign contributors or the identity of those who were solicited for contributions but declined to contribute. The *Weaver* rationale is therefore inapplicable to the Minnesota Canon.[5] We need not comment on the conclusion expressed in *Weaver* that the distinction between judicial elections and

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[5] The dissent argues that because Canon 5B(2) prohibits the campaign committee from disclosing to the candidate the names of contributors and decliners, there is no compelling interest in prohibiting the candidate from signing his own solicitation letters. If the request comes from the candidate himself rather than the committee, it is natural to expect contributors to respond to the candidate rather than the committee, which would undermine the Canon's design of interposing the committee as the intermediary between candidate and contributors.

other types of elections "if there truly is one," 309 F.3d at 1321, does not justify "greater restrictions on speech during judicial campaigns than during other types of campaigns." *Id. Cf. White*, 536 U.S. at 783, 122 S.Ct. 2528 ("[W]e neither assert nor imply that the First Amendment requires campaigns for judicial office to sound the same as those for legislative office.") We have no need to revisit our consideration of the personal solicitation clause.

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We remand with instructions to the district court to enter judgment for the plaintiffs on Count II of the Second Amended Complaint (announce clause), to enter judgment for the defendants on Counts V (solicitation clause), and to reconsider its ruling on Counts I, III and IV (partisan activities clauses) in light of the Supreme Court's decision in this case and such further evidence as the parties may offer.

BEAM, Circuit Judge, concurring and dissenting.

I concur in the court's conclusion that the district court must enter judgment for Gregory Wersal and the other plaintiffs (collectively plaintiffs) on their "announce clause" claim. I believe that the plaintiffs are also entitled to judgment on their "partisan activities" and "personal solicitation" claims. Accordingly, I dissent from the court's holdings on these issues.

I begin by again noting that Minnesota's decision to popularly elect judges invokes the need to fully and strictly apply the requirements of the First Amendment, including the Amendment's speech and associational mandates. If Minnesota wants judicial elections, it must provide the constitutional trappings required for such procedures. As Justice O'Connor noted in her concurrence above, Minnesota cannot ignore the "'crocodile [it has chosen to place] in [its] bathtub.'" *Republican Party v. White*, 536 U.S. 765, 789, 122 S.Ct. 2528, 153 L. Ed. 2d 694 (2002) (quoting

former California Supreme Court Justice Otto Kaus). Yet today, the court permits the State to do just that.

I adhere to the views expressed in my previous dissent, *see*, 247 F.3d at 885-903, and fully incorporate my remarks by reference. But this case's present posture requires a further and different inquiry: What must we do on remand? In considering this question, the court misdefines our task and renders a decision that violates both the Supreme Court's mandate and the First Amendment.

I. Our Task on Remand

The court (sometimes referred to as the panel majority or majority) gives great weight to its previous decision. This is error. The last time this case was before us, the panel majority, over my dissent, upheld the solicitation clause, the partisan-activities clause, and the announce clause. The Supreme Court granted certiorari to consider the announce clause. It reversed, explained why it reversed, and remanded the *case* for proceedings consistent with its opinion. *White*, 536 U.S. at 788, 122 S.Ct. 2528. On remand, instead of simply asking what the Court's order and opinion command, the majority clouds our task by misapplying the law-of-the-case doctrine.[9]

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[9] Footnote 5 of the court's opinion further muddies the water. First, the court writes that we apply the law of the case unless intervening authority clearly demonstrates that the law of the case was wrong. Next, the court cites *Shrink*, a case that never mentioned the doctrine. Then, the court ultimately concludes that the "clearly demonstrates" language is merely a redundant statement of the *Shrink* rule, which allows for a de novo review of legal questions. To the extent that footnote 5 suggests that the court is conducting a de novo review of the panel's previous opinion in light of the Supreme Court's teachings, I agree with that footnote. But I am not convinced that the opinion's text says or means what the footnote suggests, and in any event, the footnote does not accurately describe the way the court actually applies the doctrine.

We owe no deference to the court's earlier decision. The Supreme Court ordered us to proceed consistently with its opinion. Our only task on remand should be to ensure that we render, remand, or vacate consistently with the Supreme Court's mandate:

> A corollary to the principle that a mandate is completely controlling as to all matters within its compass is the rule that, upon a reversal and remand for further consistent proceedings, the case goes back . . . for a new determination of the issues presented *as though they had not been determined before*, pursuant to the legal principles enunciated in the . . . opinion.

Poletti v. C.I.R., 351 F.2d 345, 347 (8th Cir. 1965) (emphasis added). This de novo review is absolute because, when the mandate tells a lower court to proceed consistently with an opinion, the opinion and its teachings become part of the mandate. *Bailey v. Henslee*, 309 F.2d 840, 843 (8th Cir. 1962); *see Bankers Trust Co. v. Bethlehem Steel Corp.*, 761 F.2d 943, 949 (3d Cir. 1985).

Although the court cites a case that proceeded properly on remand, *Shrink Missouri Government PAC v. Adams*, 204 F.3d 838, 840 (8th Cir. 2000), *Shrink* does not support the court's actions. The court cites *Shrink* for the proposition that "[w]here the Supreme Court's reasoning in disposing of one issue in a case affects the validity of our earlier disposition of other issues in the same case, we will reconsider those issues on remand." *Ante* at 1042 [96a-97a]. Then, the court defines our task as determining whether "the law applied by this court or by the district court in deciding the partisan activity or solicitation clause issues was wrong." *Ante* at 1043 [98a]. But the court ultimately departs from any permissible interpretation of the law-of-the-case doctrine (or any other standard of review I can find). Two problems evidence this departure. First, the court defers to a ruling that no court has ever made. And second, the court adheres to rulings it made before, even

though the Supreme Court's new teachings require precisely the opposite rulings. I address each in turn.

II. The Court Defers to a Ruling it Never Made

Although it is undisputed that both the partisan-activities and solicitation clauses must be justified by a compelling state interest, and although these clauses restrict core, political, election speech, the last time this case was before the court, the panel majority upheld the restrictions based on an interest it forgot to define.

> The Court of Appeals concluded that [Minnesota] had established two interests as sufficiently compelling . . . preserving the impartiality of the state judiciary and preserving the appearance of the impartiality of the state judiciary. . . . [A]lthough the term is used throughout the Eighth Circuit's opinion, the briefs, the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct, and the ABA Codes of Judicial Conduct, none of these sources bothers to define it.

White, 536 U.S. at 775, 122 S.Ct. 2528. So the Supreme Court defined impartiality for us, and left open the *possibility* that judicial "openmindedness" is or might become a compelling state interest.

Even though the panel majority did not define "impartiality" or "openmindedness" in the previous appeal, it does not return to this compelling-state-interest question. Instead, the majority claims to have exercised remarkable foresight and near-psychic precision when it states today that it earlier "focused on what we can now recognize as impartiality in Justice Scalia's third sense of the word: open-mindedness."[10] *Ante* at 1043 [99a].

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[10] A computer scan of the majority's previous opinion fails to disclose its use of the words "openminded" or "openmindedness" in any definitional discussion of the words impartiality or judicial impartiality.

This stunning metamorphosis to the determinations the panel now says it made in its previous opinion presents, to borrow Justice Scalia's words, "a challenge to the credulous." *White*, 536 U.S. at 780, 122 S.Ct. 2528. And the majority further states that because the Supreme Court left open the *possibility* that openmindedness might be a compelling state interest, its supposed reliance upon such an interest was not shown to be wrong. *Ante* at 1044 [99a-100a]. This self-serving analysis is fatally incorrect for obvious reasons. The analysis focuses on the recognition of a newly minted compelling state interest that the Supreme Court scolded the majority for not finding or defining.

When the government suppresses election speech, the Constitution demands strict scrutiny; that is, a narrowly tailored restriction designed to serve a compelling state interest. *White*, 536 U.S. at 774-75, 122 S.Ct. 2528. Yet the panel majority, in neither its previous effort nor in today's opinion, has discussed how or why "openmindedness" is a compelling state interest that can be used to suppress election speech and associational activities. Neither did Justice Scalia.

As already noted, in its earlier opinion, the panel majority simply asserted that judicial impartiality (a term it forgot to define) was a compelling state interest. Only later did the Supreme Court define impartiality for us. And while the Supreme Court acknowledged openmindedness as *a possible* use as a subset of the word impartiality, and acknowledged the *possibility* that that possible subset was a compelling state interest, the panel today claims earlier reliance on this later-defined interest and, without further discussion, declares that it previously found this undefined interest compelling. If the panel's present statements accurately describe its earlier holdings, then one of the following statements must be true: either the Supreme Court missed the panel's previous message, or the previous panel was able to examine an undefined term so closely as to label it

compelling. But neither is true. Our role as an inferior court requires that we reject the first option. And we must reject the second because the very ideas of fundamental rights and strict scrutiny require that before we deem an interest compelling, we must know what that interest is. Because neither statement is true, the court's opinion misstates what occurred.

The Supreme Court refused to pursue this crucial question because it did not believe that the Minnesota Supreme Court had adopted the "announce" clause for the purpose of protecting the openmindedness of judges. There is even less chance (hardly any chance at all) that the Minnesota court adopted the partisan-activities and solicitation restrictions to protect judicial "openmindedness." Indeed, there is almost no readily discernible connection between the words contained in these restrictions and "how a [judicial] candidate would decide certain cases if elected." *Ante* at 1044 [103a].[11]

So, as a fundamental first step, we should ask whether "openmindedness" is a compelling state interest at all.[12]

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[11] This is especially true with the solicitation clause, as shown by the panel majority's rejection of *Weaver v. Bonner*, 309 F.3d 1312 (11th Cir. 2002) (striking down solicitation clause). The majority opinion states that because the solicitation clause considered by the Eleventh Circuit did not prohibit the candidate from knowing of solicitation responses or declinations, as does the Minnesota rule, the Minnesota version passes muster. If this is correct, the disconnect between the rule and judicial openmindedness is all the more obvious.

[12] The New York Court of Appeals's Watson decision—which of course does not bind us—adds nothing to this case. *See ante* at 1045 (citing *In re Watson*, 100 N.Y.2d 290, 763 N.Y.S.2d 219, 794 N.E.2d 1, 7 (2003) (per curiam)). In *Watson*, the defendant defined impartiality, and the plaintiff did not dispute that interest's compelling status. *In re Watson*, 763 N.Y.S.2d 219, 794 N.E.2d at 6. The fact that the *Watson* court reached this uncontested conclusion does not

After all, the Supreme Court left open only the possibility that openmindedness, as a desirable judicial trait, rises to the level of a "compelling state interest." The Supreme Court did not find it to be so and, upon proper consideration, it may be found to fall well short of the fundamental interest necessary to fit into this constitutional category.

Then, because we have never scrutinized the restrictions under the only interest that can possibly support them (openmindedness), we should do so now. We should ask, for example, whether preventing a judge from sending his or her own fund-solicitation letter is necessary to preserve the judges "willing[ness] to consider views that oppose [existing] preconceptions, and remain open to persuasion, when the issues arise in a pending case," the hallmarks of "openmindedness" according to Justice Scalia. *White*, 536 U.S. at 778, 122 S.Ct. 2528. This is especially true when Minnesota forbids the judge from learning of a solicitee's response or lack thereof. But, beyond this question, it is my view that the solicitation clause is unconstitutional for a more specific reason. The only way the solicitation clause survives strict scrutiny is if it is necessary and narrowly tailored to further the compelling state interest of judicial openmindedness. The Minnesota canon does *not* allow a judge to even sign a solicitation request. This is one aspect of a more complicated rule purportedly designed to protect the state's interest. But this part of the restriction renders the law not narrowly tailored. Stated another way, in a state where a judge cannot learn of his donors, to keep the judge's mind "open," must the state prohibit the judge from even signing solicitation letters? Of course not.[11]

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magically insert an analysis into the void left by the panel majority's previous decision.

[11] Footnote 8 shows just how forgiving the court views the strict-scrutiny standard; indeed, the court's language appears better suited for rational-basis review. The court asserts that the ban on personal

III. Underinclusiveness and the Partisan-Activities Clause

Nor do I understand, even under its misguided application of the law-of-the-case doctrine, how the panel can adhere to its view that underinclusiveness is not an independent ground to challenge a restriction on election speech (and now, by analogy, partisan activities). I simply questioned this premise in my earlier dissent, but Justice Scalia defenestrated it in *White*: "A law cannot be regarded as protecting an interest of the highest order, and thus as justifying a restriction upon truthful speech, when it leaves appreciable damage to that supposedly vital interest unprohibited." 536 U.S. at 780, 122 S.Ct. 2528 (internal marks and citations omitted). But the panel now agrees with neither Justice Scalia nor with me.[14]

The majority's view on underinclusiveness is an interesting but unsupportable position because I am certain that Justice Scalia meant what he wrote in *White*. His words bear repeating: "A law [here the partisan-activities restriction] *cannot* be regarded as protecting an interest of

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solicitation is justified because "it is natural to expect contributors to respond to the candidate rather than the committee" if the candidate signs the letter. This footnote is wrong because it assumes that either candidates will violate the law or that their contributors will not follow the candidate's direction to reply in the way the law allows. Why is it not "natural to expect" that candidates will obey the law and direct replies to the committee, as the rules require? And why would we expect the contributors to do anything but obey the candidate's direction? The record does not even approach answering (or even asking) these questions. The court fails to realize the significance of strict scrutiny—and its burden-of-proof allocation—when it chooses, by default, the speech-suppressing answer based on its own unsupported hypothesis.

[14] Perhaps the court does not feel this language is binding. In *White*, Justice Scalia wrote for the Court and cited that language from one of his concurring opinions. The fact that the language used to be non-binding does not change the fact that it is now the law.

the highest order [possibly a judge's openmindedness]... when it leaves appreciable damage to that... interest unprohibited." *Id.* The panel apparently does not dispute that we must strike down the partisan-activities clause unless we regard it as protecting an interest of the highest order. But somehow (and I admit I do not see how) the court feels free to finesse this Supreme Court language to allow the partisan-activities clause to purport to protect judicial openmindedness even though the clause leaves appreciable damage (affiliation with and the support from other special-interest groups) unprohibited.[15] The facts

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[15] Even though Justice Scalia wrote the applicable rule in this very case when the Court reversed the first time, the majority today ignores that language and instead relies upon *McConnell v. FEC*, 540 U.S. 93, — - —, 124 S.Ct. 619, 694-98, 157 L. Ed. 2d 491 (2003). That reliance puzzles me. First, I don't understand why the court today pieces together blurbs from that several-hundred-page opinion, when Justice Scalia wrote a clear, one-sentence rule. Remarkably, even though the Supreme Court decided *McConnell* shortly after it decided *White*, and even though the McConnell opinion contained hundreds of pages and more citations than I care to count, the *McConnell* opinion didn't cite *White*. I am quite certain that the Supreme Court did not overlook *White* when it wrote *McConnell*. Instead, it recognized that the two cases were so different as to not even justify a single citation. But this distinction does not dissuade the court today. When the puzzle pieces seem out of place, the court pounds them until they wedge together; the problem is, the pieces are not only in the wrong place, but they are from the wrong puzzle.

Even this patchwork formulation doesn't support the court's holding. In *McConnell*, the "Court held that *the evidence* in the case supported the conclusion that television advertising posed the *greater threat*, and therefore the record amply justifie[d] Congress' line drawing." *Ante* at [106a] (citing *McConnell*, 540 U.S. at —, 124 S.Ct. at 697) (emphasis added and internal quotations omitted). Determining which threat is "greater" requires a comparison of the two threats. In its previous opinion, the panel majority purported to examine the threats presented by association with political parties, concluded they were not arbitrary, cited inapplicable cases that

establish the probability of greater harm to judicial

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support treating political parties differently, and held that the State had satisfied its heavy burden. But the panel majority never discussed (and it does not discuss today) the threats that special-interest-group association pose, even though the record highlights this problem. It certainly fails to discuss "ample" record evidence (past or present) that supports the idea that political association presents a greater threat to judicial openmindedness than special-interest association. Indeed, the record, including a Minnesota Supreme Court hearing conducted when the court was amending the ethical rules, shows that special-interest-group association posed *at least* as great a threat. *See Hearing on the Amendment to Canon 5 of the Code of Judicial Conduct*, C7-81-300, Tr. at 36-37, 40 (Minn. Nov. 19, 1997) (Minnesota District Judge Gary Meyer testifying) (The rule "allows a candidate for the judiciary to seek and use the endorsements of such special interest groups as the National Rifle Association, the Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life, the National Organization for Women, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, or any labor union. Clearly, organizations such as these can and frequently do support and oppose candidates for political office.... It appears that the proposed changes to [the rule] are an attempt to strip political affiliation from judicial elections, but at the same time, they allow and perhaps encourage candidates to adopt issue group affiliation. This doesn't take party politics out of the judicial election.... Is it appropriate for a judicial candidate to speak and appear at a MADD ... function but not a political party? Why should these special interest endorsements and activity be protected as constitutionally guaranteed free speech and assembly but political party endorsements and activity not be so protected.").

We should not remand to the district court to allow it to review the record for evidence that is not there. There simply is not "ample" record evidence to show that this line drawing is necessary to advance the state's interest in an openminded judiciary, or in the appearance of an openminded judiciary. In a gun-control case, how is the candidate's openmindedness more affected by his political affiliation than his NRA affiliation? In an abortion case, would association with a political party influence judicial minds more than association with pro-life or pro-choice groups? To justify the restriction, even the court's proposed rule requires a "yes" answer to these questions. Because neither logic nor the record supports a "yes" answer, the Constitution forbids the line drawing.

openmindedness from association with these other narrowly focused, politically active groups who have persistent interest in many of the cases an elected judge may be called upon to decide in the Minnesota courts.[16]

Even so, the majority never examines whether these other political contacts pose an "appreciable danger." If a law cannot pass strict scrutiny when it leaves an appreciable danger unprohibited, the starting place must be to ask whether an appreciable danger exists at all and, if so, does the law leave it unprohibited? This is the essence of the "underinclusiveness" inquiry and it clearly *is* an independent ground for challenging the restriction. And although the panel correctly notes that the underinclusiveness challenge clearly points toward two other fatal defects in the Minnesota law, the unprotected-appreciable-danger challenge stands on its own and defeats the Minnesota rule.

In short, although the panel's interpretation of Supreme Court underinclusiveness jurisprudence is inventive, I choose Justice Scalia's binding interpretation of the law. The Minnesota partisan-activities clause, as presently written, violates the Constitution.

IV. CONCLUSION

The panel majority uses the discretionary, judicial-economy-based, law-of-the-case doctrine to reach an unsupportable result. Minnesota has failed to establish a "compelling state interest," at least one with a discernible con-

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[16] In this regard, I take judicial notice, for instance, of candidate filings contained in Minnesota Board of Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Reports for year 2000 and in Minnesota media reports that reveal that large law firms and their members contribute substantial sums of money to judicial candidates, especially incumbent candidates, as well as to non-judicial candidates for state and federal office. *See In re Ahlers*, 794 F.2d 388, 392 n. 1 (8th Cir. 1986) (permitting consideration of matter outside the record on appeal), *rev'd on other grounds sub nom. Norwest Bank Worthington v. Ahlers*, 485 U.S. 197, 108 S.Ct. 963, 99 L. Ed. 2d 169 (1988).

nection to the regulations at issue. One regulation is woefully underinclusive and the other overly broad but with no real connection to a constitutionally protectable interest. The majority construes its previous ruling as deciding a question that did not exist when the decision was rendered. And, the panel defers to its own hypothetical ruling instead of applying the mandate of the Supreme Court. For these reasons, and those expressed in my previous dissent, I concur in the court's invalidation of the Minnesota Supreme Court's announce clause, but dissent from the court's failure to invalidate the partisan-activities and solicitation restrictions.

APPENDIX D

UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, ET AL.
PETITIONERS,

v.

SUZANNE WHITE, CHAIRPERSON, MINNESOTA BOARD OF JUDICIAL STANDARDS, ET AL.

No. 01-521

Argued March 26, 2002
Decided June 27, 2002

Justice SCALIA delivered the opinion of the Court.

The question presented in this case is whether the First Amendment permits the Minnesota Supreme Court to prohibit candidates for judicial election in that State from announcing their views on disputed legal and political issues.

I

Since Minnesota's admission to the Union in 1858, the State's Constitution has provided for the selection of all state judges by popular election. Minn. Const., Art. VI, § 7. Since 1912, those elections have been nonpartisan. Act of June 19, ch. 2, 1912 Minn. Laws Special Sess., pp. 4-6. Since 1974, they have been subject to a legal restriction which states that a "candidate for a judicial office, including an incumbent judge," shall not "announce his or her views on disputed legal or political issues." Minn. Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 5(A)(3)(d)(i)(2000). This prohibition, promulgated by the Minnesota Supreme Court and based on

Canon 7(B) of the 1972 American Bar Association (ABA) Model Code of Judicial Conduct, is known as the "announce clause." Incumbent judges who violate it are subject to discipline, including removal, censure, civil penalties, and suspension without pay. Minn. Rules of Board on Judicial Standards 4(a)(6), 11(d) (2002). Lawyers who run for judicial office also must comply with the announce clause. Minn. Rule of Professional Conduct 8.2(b) (2002) ("A lawyer who is a candidate for judicial office shall comply with the applicable provisions of the Code of Judicial Conduct"). Those who violate it are subject to, *inter alia*, disbarment, suspension, and probation. Rule 8.4(a); Minn. Rules on Lawyers Professional Responsibility 8-14, 15(a) (2002).

In 1996, one of the petitioners, Gregory Wersal, ran for associate justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court. In the course of the campaign, he distributed literature criticizing several Minnesota Supreme Court decisions on issues such as crime, welfare, and abortion. A complaint against Wersal challenging, among other things, the propriety of this literature was filed with the Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility, the agency which, under the direction of the Minnesota Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board,[1] investigates and prosecutes ethical violations of lawyer candidates for judicial office. The Lawyers Board dismissed the complaint; with regard to the charges that his campaign materials violated the announce clause, it expressed doubt whether the clause could constitutionally be enforced. Nonetheless, fearing that further ethical complaints would jeopardize his ability to practice law, Wersal withdrew from the election. In 1998, Wersal ran again for the same office. Early in that race, he sought an advisory opinion from the Lawyers Board with regard to whether it planned to

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[1] The Eighth Circuit did not parse out the separate functions of these two entities in the case at hand, referring to the two of them collectively as the "Lawyers Board." We take the same approach.

enforce the announce clause. The Lawyers Board responded equivocally, stating that, although it had significant doubts about the constitutionality of the provision, it was unable to answer his question because he had not submitted a list of the announcements he wished to make.[2]

Shortly thereafter, Wersal filed this lawsuit in Federal District Court against respondents,[3] seeking, *inter alia*, a declaration that the announce clause violates the First Amendment and an injunction against its enforcement. Wersal alleged that he was forced to refrain from announcing his views on disputed issues during the 1998 campaign, to the point where he declined response to questions put to him by the press and public, out of concern that he might run afoul of the announce clause. Other plaintiffs in the suit, including the Minnesota Republican Party, alleged that, because the clause kept Wersal from announcing his views, they were unable to learn those views and support or oppose his candidacy accordingly. The parties filed cross-motions for summary judgment, and the District Court found in favor of respondents, holding that the announce clause did not violate the First Amendment. 63 F. Supp. 2d 967 (D. Minn. 1999). Over a dissent by Judge Beam, the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit

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[2] Nor did Wersal have any success receiving answers from the Lawyers Board when he included "concrete examples," *post*, at 2547 [156a], n. 2 (STEVENS, J., dissenting), in his request for an advisory opinion on other subjects a month later:

"As you are well aware, there is pending litigation over the constitutionality of certain portions of Canon 5. You are a plaintiff in this action and you have sued, among others, me as Director of the Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility and Charles Lundberg as the Chair of the Board of Lawyers Professional Responsibility. Due to this pending litigation, I will not be answering your request for an advisory opinion at this time." App. 153.

[3] Respondents are officers of the Lawyers Board and of the Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards (Judicial Board), which enforces the ethical rules applicable to judges.

affirmed. *Republican Party of Minn. v. Kelly*, 247 F.3d 854 (2001). We granted certiorari. 534 U.S. 1054, 122 S.Ct. 643, 151 L. Ed. 2d 561 (2001).

II

Before considering the constitutionality of the announce clause, we must be clear about its meaning. Its text says that a candidate for judicial office shall not "announce his or her views on disputed legal or political issues." Minn. Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 5(A)(3)(d)(i) (2002).

We know that "announc[ing] . . . views" on an issue covers much more than *promising* to decide an issue a particular way. The prohibition extends to the candidate's mere statement of his current position, even if he does not bind himself to maintain that position after election. All the parties agree this is the case, because the Minnesota Code contains a so-called "pledges or promises" clause, which *separately* prohibits judicial candidates from making "pledges or promises of conduct in office other than the faithful and impartial performance of the duties of the office," *ibid.*—a prohibition that is not challenged here and on which we express no view.

There are, however, some limitations that the Minnesota Supreme Court has placed upon the scope of the announce clause that are not (to put it politely) immediately apparent from its text. The statements that formed the basis of the complaint against Wersal in 1996 included criticism of past decisions of the Minnesota Supreme Court. One piece of campaign literature stated that "[t]he Minnesota Supreme Court has issued decisions which are marked by their disregard for the Legislature and a lack of common sense." App. 37. It went on to criticize a decision excluding from evidence confessions by criminal defendants that were not tape-recorded, asking "[s]hould we conclude that because the Supreme Court does not trust police, it allows confessed criminals to go free?" *Ibid.* It criticized a decision striking

down a state law restricting welfare benefits, asserting that "[i]t's the Legislature which should set our spending policies." *Ibid.* And it criticized a decision requiring public financing of abortions for poor women as "unprecedented" and a "pro-abortion stance." *Id.*, at 38. Although one would think that all of these statements touched on disputed legal or political issues, they did not (or at least do not now) fall within the scope of the announce clause. The Judicial Board issued an opinion stating that judicial candidates may criticize past decisions, and the Lawyers Board refused to discipline Wersal for the foregoing statements because, in part, it thought they did not violate the announce clause. The Eighth Circuit relied on the Judicial Board's opinion in upholding the announce clause, 247 F.3d, at 882, and the Minnesota Supreme Court recently embraced the Eighth Circuit's interpretation, *In re Code of Judicial Conduct*, 639 N.W.2d 55 (Minn. 2002).

There are yet further limitations upon the apparent plain meaning of the announce clause: In light of the constitutional concerns, the District Court construed the clause to reach only disputed issues that are likely to come before the candidate if he is elected judge. 63 F. Supp. 2d, at 986. The Eighth Circuit accepted this limiting interpretation by the District Court, and in addition construed the clause to allow general discussions of case law and judicial philosophy. 247 F.3d, at 881-882. The Supreme Court of Minnesota adopted these interpretations as well when it ordered enforcement of the announce clause in accordance with the Eighth Circuit's opinion. *In re Code of Judicial Conduct, supra.*

It seems to us, however, that—like the text of the announce clause itself—these limitations upon the text of the announce clause are not all that they appear to be. First, respondents acknowledged at oral argument that statements critical of past judicial decisions are *not* permissible if the candidate also states that he is against *stare decisis*.

Tr. of Oral Arg. 33-34.[4] Thus, candidates must choose between stating their views critical of past decisions and stating their views in opposition to *stare decisis*. Or, to look at it more concretely, they may state their view that prior decisions were erroneous only if they do not assert that they, if elected, have any power to eliminate erroneous decisions. Second, limiting the scope of the clause to issues likely to come before a court is not much of a limitation at all. One would hardly expect the "disputed legal or political issues" raised in the course of a state judicial election to include such matters as whether the Federal Government should end the embargo of Cuba. Quite obviously, they will be those legal or political disputes that are the proper (or by past decisions have been made the improper) business of the state courts. And within that relevant category, "[t]here is almost no legal or political issue that is unlikely to come before a judge of an American court, state or federal, of general jurisdiction." *Buckley v. Illinois Judicial Inquiry Bd.*, 997 F.2d 224, 229 (C.A. 7 1993). Third, construing the clause to allow "general" discussions of case law and judicial philosophy turns out to be of little help in an election campaign. At oral argument, respondents gave, as an example of this exception, that a candidate is free to assert that he is a "'strict constructionist.'" Tr. of Oral Arg. 29. But that, like most other philosophical generalities, has little meaningful content for the electorate unless it is exemplified by application to a particular issue of construction likely to come before a court—for example, whether a particular statute runs afoul of any provision of the

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[4] Justice GINSBURG argues that we should ignore this concession at oral argument because it is inconsistent with the Eighth Circuit's interpretation of the announce clause. *Post*, at 2553 [167a] (dissenting opinion). As she appears to acknowledge, however, the Eighth Circuit was merely silent on this particular question. *Ibid.* Silence is hardly inconsistent with what respondents conceded at oral argument.

Constitution. Respondents conceded that the announce clause would prohibit the candidate from exemplifying his philosophy in this fashion. *Id.*, at 43. Without such application to real-life issues, all candidates can claim to be "strict constructionists" with equal (and unhelpful) plausibility.

In any event, it is clear that the announce clause prohibits a judicial candidate from stating his views on any specific nonfanciful legal question within the province of the court for which he is running, except in the context of discussing past decisions—and in the latter context as well, if he expresses the view that he is not bound by *stare decisis*.[5]

Respondents contend that this still leaves plenty of topics for discussion on the campaign trail. These include a candidate's "character," "education," "work habits," and

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[5] In 1990, in response to concerns that its 1972 Model Canon—which was the basis for Minnesota's announce clause—violated the First Amendment, see L. Milord, The Development of the ABA Judicial Code 50 (1992), the ABA replaced that canon with a provision that prohibits a judicial candidate from making "statements that commit or appear to commit the candidate with respect to cases, controversies or issues that are likely to come before the court." ABA Model Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 5(A)(3)(d)(ii) (2000). At oral argument, respondents argued that the limiting constructions placed upon Minnesota's announce clause by the Eighth Circuit, and adopted by the Minnesota Supreme Court, render the scope of the clause no broader than the ABA's 1990 canon. Tr. of Oral Arg. 38. This argument is somewhat curious because, based on the same constitutional concerns that had motivated the ABA, the Minnesota Supreme Court was urged to replace the announce clause with the new ABA language, but, unlike other jurisdictions, declined. Final Report of the Advisory Committee to Review the ABA Model Code of Judicial Conduct and the Rules of the Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards 5-6 (June 29, 1994), reprinted at App. 367-368. The ABA, however, agrees with respondents' position. Brief for ABA as *Amicus Curiae* 5. We do not know whether the announce clause (as interpreted by state authorities) and the 1990 ABA canon are one and the same. No aspect of our constitutional analysis turns on this question.

"how [he] would handle administrative duties if elected." Brief for Respondents 35-36. Indeed, the Judicial Board has printed a list of preapproved questions which judicial candidates are allowed to answer. These include how the candidate feels about cameras in the courtroom, how he would go about reducing the caseload, how the costs of judicial administration can be reduced, and how he proposes to ensure that minorities and women are treated more fairly by the court system. Minnesota State Bar Association Judicial Elections Task Force Report & Recommendations, App. C (June 19, 1997), reprinted at App. 97-103. Whether this list of preapproved subjects, and other topics not prohibited by the announce clause, adequately fulfill the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of speech is the question to which we now turn.

III

As the Court of Appeals recognized, the announce clause both prohibits speech on the basis of its content and burdens a category of speech that is "at the core of our First Amendment freedoms"—speech about the qualifications of candidates for public office. 247 F.3d, at 861, 863. The Court of Appeals concluded that the proper test to be applied to determine the constitutionality of such a restriction is what our cases have called strict scrutiny, *id.*, at 864; the parties do not dispute that this is correct. Under the strict-scrutiny test, respondents have the burden to prove that the announce clause is (1) narrowly tailored, to serve (2) a compelling state interest. *E.g., Eu v. San Francisco County Democratic Central Comm.*, 489 U.S. 214, 222, 109 S.Ct. 1013, 103 L. Ed. 2d 271 (1989). In order for respondents to show that the announce clause is narrowly tailored, they must demonstrate that it does not "unnecessarily circumscrib[e] protected expression." *Brown v. Hartlage*, 456 U.S. 45, 54, 102 S.Ct. 1523, 71 L. Ed. 2d 732 (1982).

The Court of Appeals concluded that respondents had established two interests as sufficiently compelling to justi-

fy the announce clause: preserving the impartiality of the state judiciary and preserving the appearance of the impartiality of the state judiciary. 247 F.3d, at 867. Respondents reassert these two interests before us, arguing that the first is compelling because it protects the due process rights of litigants, and that the second is compelling because it preserves public confidence in the judiciary.[6] Respondents are rather vague, however, about what they mean by "impartiality." Indeed, although the term is used throughout the Eighth Circuit's opinion, the briefs, the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct, and the ABA Codes of Judicial Conduct, none of these sources bothers to define it. Clarity on this point is essential before we can decide whether impartiality is indeed a compelling state interest, and, if so, whether the announce clause is narrowly tailored to achieve it.

A

One meaning of "impartiality" in the judicial context—and of course its root meaning—is the lack of bias for or against either *party* to the proceeding. Impartiality in this sense assures equal application of the law. That is, it guarantees a party that the judge who hears his case will apply the law to him in the same way he applies it to any other party. This is the traditional sense in which the term is used. See Webster's New International Dictionary 1247 (2d ed. 1950) (defining "impartial" as "[n]ot partial; esp., not favoring one more than another; treating all alike; unbiased; equitable; fair; just"). It is also the sense in which it is used in the cases cited by respondents and *amici* for the proposition that an impartial judge is essential to due process.

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[6] Although the Eighth Circuit also referred to the compelling interest in an "independent" judiciary, 247 F.3d, at 864-868, both it and respondents appear to use that term, as applied to the issues involved in this case, as interchangeable with "impartial." See *id.*, at 864 (describing a judge's independence as his "ability to apply the law neutrally"); Brief for Respondents 20, n. 4 ("[J]udicial impartiality is linked to judicial independence").

Tumey v. Ohio, 273 U.S. 510, 523, 531-534, 47 S.Ct. 437, 71 L. Ed. 749 (1927) (judge violated due process by sitting in a case in which it would be in his financial interest to find against one of the parties); *Aetna Life Ins. Co. v. Lavoie*, 475 U.S. 813, 822-825, 106 S.Ct. 1580, 89 L. Ed. 2d 823 (1986) (same); *Ward v. Monroeville*, 409 U.S. 57, 58-62, 93 S.Ct. 80, 34 L. Ed. 2d 267 (1972) (same); *Johnson v. Mississippi*, 403 U.S. 212, 215-216, 91 S.Ct. 1778, 29 L. Ed. 2d 423 (1971) (*per curiam*) (judge violated due process by sitting in a case in which one of the parties was a previously successful litigant against him); *Bracy v. Gramley*, 520 U.S. 899, 905, 117 S.Ct. 1793, 138 L. Ed. 2d 97 (1997) (would violate due process if a judge was disposed to rule against defendants who did not bribe him in order to cover up the fact that he regularly ruled in favor of defendants who did bribe him); *In re Murchison*, 349 U.S. 133, 137-139, 75 S.Ct. 623, 99 L. Ed. 942 (1955) (judge violated due process by sitting in the criminal trial of defendant whom he had indicted).

We think it plain that the announce clause is not narrowly tailored to serve impartiality (or the appearance of impartiality) in this sense. Indeed, the clause is barely tailored to serve that interest *at all*, inasmuch as it does not restrict speech for or against particular *parties*, but rather speech for or against particular *issues*. To be sure, when a case arises that turns on a legal issue on which the judge (as a candidate) had taken a particular stand, the party taking the opposite stand is likely to lose. But not because of any bias against that party, or favoritism toward the other party. *Any* party taking that position is just as likely to lose. The judge is applying the law (as he sees it) even-handedly.[7]

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[7] Justice STEVENS asserts that the announce clause "serves the State's interest in maintaining both the appearance of this form of impartiality and its actuality." *Post*, at 2548 [158a]. We do not

B

It is perhaps possible to use the term "impartiality" in the judicial context (though this is certainly not a common usage) to mean lack of preconception in favor of or against a particular *legal view*. This sort of impartiality would be concerned, not with guaranteeing litigants equal application of the law, but rather with guaranteeing them an equal chance to persuade the court on the legal points in their case. Impartiality in this sense may well be an interest served by the announce clause, but it is not a *compelling* state interest, as strict scrutiny requires. A judge's lack of predisposition regarding the relevant legal issues in a case has never been thought a necessary component of equal justice, and with good reason. For one thing, it is virtually impossible to find a judge who does not have preconceptions about the law. As then-Justice REHNQUIST observed of our own Court: "Since most Justices come to this bench no earlier than their middle years, it would be unusual if they had not by that time formulated at least some tentative notions that would influence them in their interpretation of the sweeping clauses of the Constitution and their interaction with one another. It would be not merely unusual, but extraordinary, if they had not at least given opinions as to constitutional issues in their previous legal careers." *Laird v. Tatum*, 409 U.S. 824, 835, 93 S.Ct. 7, 34 L. Ed. 2d 50 (1972) (memorandum opinion). Indeed, even if it were possible to select judges who did not have preconceived

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disagree. Some of the speech prohibited by the announce clause may well exhibit a bias against parties—including Justice STEVENS's example of an election speech stressing the candidate's unbroken record of affirming convictions for rape, *ibid.* That is why we are careful to say that the announce clause is "*barely* tailored to serve that interest," *supra*, at 2535 [132a] (emphasis added). The question under our strict scrutiny test, however, is not whether the announce clause serves this interest *at all*, but whether it is *narrowly tailored* to serve this interest. It is not.

views on legal issues, it would hardly be desirable to do so. "Proof that a Justice's mind at the time he joined the Court was a complete *tabula rasa* in the area of constitutional adjudication would be evidence of lack of qualification, not lack of bias." *Ibid.* The Minnesota Constitution positively forbids the selection to courts of general jurisdiction of judges who are impartial in the sense of having no views on the law. Minn. Const., Art. VI, § 5 ("Judges of the supreme court, the court of appeals and the district court shall be learned in the law"). And since avoiding judicial preconceptions on legal issues is neither possible nor desirable, pretending otherwise by attempting to preserve the "appearance" of that type of impartiality can hardly be a compelling state interest either.

C

A third possible meaning of "impartiality" (again not a common one) might be described as open-mindedness. This quality in a judge demands, not that he have no preconceptions on legal issues, but that he be willing to consider views that oppose his preconceptions, and remain open to persuasion, when the issues arise in a pending case. This sort of impartiality seeks to guarantee each litigant, not an *equal* chance to win the legal points in the case, but at least *some* chance of doing so. It may well be that impartiality in this sense, and the appearance of it, are desirable in the judiciary, but we need not pursue that inquiry, since we do not believe the Minnesota Supreme Court adopted the announce clause for that purpose.

Respondents argue that the announce clause serves the interest in open-mindedness, or at least in the appearance of openmindedness, because it relieves a judge from pressure to rule a certain way in order to maintain consistency with statements the judge has previously made. The problem is, however, that statements in election campaigns are such an infinitesimal portion of the public commitments to legal positions that judges (or judges-to-be) undertake, that

this object of the prohibition is implausible. Before they arrive on the bench (whether by election or otherwise) judges have often committed themselves on legal issues that they must later rule upon. See, *e.g.*, *Laird*, *supra*, at 831-833, 93 S.Ct. 7 (describing Justice Black's participation in several cases construing and deciding the constitutionality of the Fair Labor Standards Act, even though as a Senator he had been one of its principal authors; and Chief Justice Hughes's authorship of the opinion overruling *Adkins v. Children's Hospital of D. C.*, 261 U.S. 525, 43 S.Ct. 394, 67 L. Ed. 785 (1923), a case he had criticized in a book written before his appointment to the Court). More common still is a judge's confronting a legal issue on which he has expressed an opinion while on the bench. Most frequently, of course, that prior expression will have occurred in ruling on an earlier case. But judges often state their views on disputed legal issues outside the context of adjudication—in classes that they conduct, and in books and speeches. Like the ABA Codes of Judicial Conduct, the Minnesota Code not only permits but encourages this. See Minn. Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 4(B) (2002) ("A judge may write, lecture, teach, speak and participate in other extra-judicial activities concerning the law . . ."); Minn. Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 4(B), Comment. (2002) ("To the extent that time permits, a judge is encouraged to do so . . ."). That is quite incompatible with the notion that the need for open-mindedness (or for the appearance of open-mindedness) lies behind the prohibition at issue here.

The short of the matter is this: In Minnesota, a candidate for judicial office may not say "I think it is constitutional for the legislature to prohibit same-sex marriages." He may say the very same thing, however, up until the very day before he declares himself a candidate, and may say it repeatedly (until litigation is pending) after he is elected. As a means of pursuing the objective of open-mindedness

that respondents now articulate, the announce clause is so woefully underinclusive as to render belief in that purpose a challenge to the credulous. *See City of Ladue v. Gilleo*, 512 U.S. 43, 52-53, 114 S.Ct. 2038, 129 L. Ed. 2d 36 (1994) (noting that underinclusiveness "diminish[es] the credibility of the government's rationale for restricting speech"); *Florida Star v. B.J. F.*, 491 U.S. 524, 541-542, 109 S.Ct. 2603, 105 L. Ed. 2d 443 (1989) (SCALIA, J., concurring in judgment) ("[A] law cannot be regarded as protecting an interest of the highest order, and thus as justifying a restriction upon truthful speech, when it leaves appreciable damage to that supposedly vital interest unprohibited" (internal quotation marks and citation omitted)).

Justice STEVENS asserts that statements made in an election campaign pose a special threat to open-mindedness because the candidate, when elected judge, will have a *particular* reluctance to contradict them. *Post*, at 2548 [156a-157a]. That might be plausible, perhaps, with regard to campaign *promises*. A candidate who says "If elected, I will vote to uphold the legislature's power to prohibit same-sex marriages" will positively be breaking his word if he does not do so (although one would be naive not to recognize that campaign promises are—by long democratic tradition—the least binding form of human commitment). But, as noted earlier, the Minnesota Supreme Court has adopted a separate prohibition on campaign "pledges or promises," which is not challenged here. The proposition that judges feel significantly greater compulsion, or appear to feel significantly greater compulsion, to maintain consistency with *nonpromissory* statements made during a judicial campaign than with such statements made before or after the campaign is not self-evidently true. It seems to us quite likely, in fact, that in many cases the opposite is true. We doubt, for example, that a mere statement of position enunciated during the pendency of an election will be regarded by a judge as more binding—or as more likely to

subject him to popular disfavor if reconsidered—than a carefully considered holding that the judge set forth in an earlier opinion denying some individual's claim to justice. In any event, it suffices to say that respondents have not carried the burden imposed by our strict-scrutiny test to establish this proposition (that campaign statements are uniquely destructive of open-mindedness) on which the validity of the announce clause rests. See, *e.g.*, *Landmark Communications, Inc. v. Virginia*, 435 U.S. 829, 841, 98 S.Ct. 1535, 56 L. Ed. 2d 1 (1978) (rejecting speech restriction subject to strict scrutiny where the State "offered little more than assertion and conjecture to support its claim that without criminal sanctions the objectives of the statutory scheme would be seriously undermined"); *United States v. Playboy Entertainment Group, Inc.*, 529 U.S. 803, 816-825, 120 S.Ct. 1878, 146 L. Ed. 2d 865 (2000) (same).[a]

Moreover, the notion that the special context of electioneering justifies an *abridgment* of the right to speak out on disputed issues sets our First Amendment jurisprudence on its head. "[D]ebate on the qualifications of candidates" is "at the core of our electoral process and of the First Amendment freedoms," not at the edges. *Eu*, 489

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[a] We do not agree with Justice STEVENS's broad assertion that "to the extent that [statements on legal issues] seek to enhance the popularity of the candidate by indicating how he would rule in specific cases if elected, they evidence a *lack of fitness for office*." *Post*, at 2547 [155a] (emphasis added). Of course *all* statements on real-world legal issues "indicate" how the speaker would rule "in specific cases." And if making such statements (*of honestly held views*) with the hope of enhancing one's chances with the electorate displayed a lack of fitness for office, so would similarly motivated honest statements of judicial candidates made with the hope of enhancing their chances of confirmation by the Senate, or indeed of appointment by the President. Since such statements are made, we think, in every confirmation hearing, Justice STEVENS must contemplate a federal bench filled with the unfit.

U.S., at 222-223, 109 S.Ct. 1013 (internal quotation marks omitted). "The role that elected officials play in our society makes it all the more imperative that they be allowed freely to express themselves on matters of current public importance." *Wood v. Georgia*, 370 U.S. 375, 395, 82 S.Ct. 1364, 8 L. Ed. 2d 569 (1962). "It is simply not the function of government to select which issues are worth discussing or debating in the course of a political campaign." *Brown*, 456 U.S., at 60, 102 S.Ct. 1523 (internal quotation marks omitted). We have never allowed the government to prohibit candidates from communicating relevant information to voters during an election.

Justice GINSBURG would do so—and much of her dissent confirms rather than refutes our conclusion that the purpose behind the announce clause is not openmindedness in the judiciary, but the undermining of judicial elections. She contends that the announce clause must be constitutional because due process would be denied if an elected judge sat in a case involving an issue on which he had previously announced his view. *Post*, at 2556-2557, 2558 [174a-175a, 177a]. She reaches this conclusion because, she says, such a judge would have a "direct, personal, substantial, and pecuniary interest" in ruling consistently with his previously announced view, in order to reduce the risk that he will be "voted off the bench and thereby lose [his] salary and emoluments," *post*, at 2556 [174a] (internal quotation marks and alterations omitted). But elected judges—regardless of whether they have announced any views beforehand—*always* face the pressure of an electorate who might disagree with their rulings and therefore vote them off the bench. Surely the judge who frees Timothy McVeigh places his job much more at risk than the judge who (horror of horrors!) reconsiders his previously announced view on a disputed legal issue. So if, as Justice GINSBURG claims, it violates due process for a judge to sit in a case in which ruling one way rather than

another increases his prospects for reelection, then—quite simply—the practice of electing judges is itself a violation of due process. It is not difficult to understand how one with these views would approve the election-nullifying effect of the announce clause.[9] They are not, however, the views reflected in the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, which has coexisted with the election of judges ever since it was adopted, see *infra*, at 2540 [141a].

Justice GINSBURG devotes the rest of her dissent to attacking arguments we do not make. For example, despite the number of pages she dedicates to disproving this proposition, *post*, at 2550-2552 [162a-166a], we neither assert nor imply that the First Amendment requires campaigns for judicial office to sound the same as those for legislative office.[10] What we do assert, and what Justice GINSBURG ignores, is that, *even if* the First Amendment allows greater regulation of judicial election campaigns than legislative election campaigns, the announce clause still fails strict scrutiny because it is woefully underinclusive, prohibiting announcements by judges (and would-be judges) only at certain times and in certain forms. We rely on the cases involving speech during elections, *supra*, at 2538 [186a-188a], only to make the obvious point that this underinclusiveness cannot be explained by resort to the

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[9] Justice GINSBURG argues that the announce clause is not election nullifying because Wersal criticized past decisions of the Minnesota Supreme Court in his campaign literature and the Lawyers Board decided not to discipline him for doing so. *Post*, at 2554 [168a]. As we have explained, however, had Wersal additionally stated during his campaign that he did not feel bound to follow those erroneous decisions, he would not have been so lucky. *Supra*, at 2533-2534 [128a-129a]. This predicament hardly reflects "the robust communication of ideas and views from judicial candidate to voter." *Post*, at 2554 [170a].

[10] Justice STEVENS devotes most of his dissent to this same argument that we do not make.

notion that the First Amendment provides less protection during an election campaign than at other times.[11]

But in any case, Justice GINSBURG greatly exaggerates the difference between judicial and legislative elections. She asserts that "the rationale underlying unconstrained speech in elections for political office—that representative government depends on the public's ability to choose agents who will act at its behest—does not carry over to campaigns for the bench." *Post*, at 2551 [164a]. This complete separation of the judiciary from the enterprise of "representative government" might have some truth in those countries where judges neither make law themselves nor set aside the laws enacted by the legislature. It is not a true picture of the American system. Not only do state-court judges possess the power to "make" common law, but they have the immense power to shape the States' constitutions as well. See, *e.g.*, *Baker v. State*, 170 Vt. 194, 744 A.2d 864 (1999). Which is precisely why the election of state judges became popular.[12]

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[11] Nor do we assert that candidates for judicial office should be *compelled* to announce their views on disputed legal issues. Thus, Justice GINSBURG's repeated invocation of instances in which nominees to this Court declined to announce such views during Senate confirmation hearings is pointless. *Post*, at 2552 [165a], n. 1, 2558 [177a], n. 4. That the practice of *voluntarily* demurring does not establish the legitimacy of *legal compulsion* to demur is amply demonstrated by the unredacted text of the sentence she quotes in part, *post*, at 2558 [177a], from *Laird v. Tatum*, 409 U.S. 824, 836, n. 5, 93 S.Ct. 7, 34 L. Ed. 2d 50 (1972): *"In terms of propriety, rather than disqualification*, I would distinguish quite sharply between a public statement made prior to nomination for the bench, on the one hand, and a public statement made by a nominee to the bench." (Emphasis added.)

[12] Although Justice STEVENS at times appears to agree with Justice GINSBURG's premise that the judiciary is completely separated from the enterprise of representative government, *post*, at 2547 [155a] ("[E]very good judge is fully aware of the distinction

IV

To sustain the announce clause, the Eighth Circuit relied heavily on the fact that a pervasive practice of prohibiting judicial candidates from discussing disputed legal and political issues developed during the last half of the 20th century. 247 F.3d, at 879-880. It is true that a "universal and long-established" tradition of prohibiting certain conduct creates "a strong presumption" that the prohibition is constitutional: "Principles of liberty fundamental enough to have been embodied within constitutional guarantees are not readily erased from the Nation's consciousness." *McIntyre v. Ohio Elections Comm'n*, 514 U.S. 334, 375-377, 115 S.Ct. 1511, 131 L. Ed. 2d 426 (1995) (SCALIA, J., dissenting). The practice of prohibiting speech by judicial candidates on disputed issues, however, is neither long nor universal.

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between the law and a personal point of view"), he eventually appears to concede that the separation does not hold true for many judges who sit on courts of last resort, *ibid.* ("If he is not a judge on the highest court in the State, he has an obligation to follow the precedent of that court, not his personal views or public opinion polls"); *post*, at 2547 [156a], n. 2. Even if the policymaking capacity of judges were limited to courts of last resort, that would only prove that the announce clause fails strict scrutiny. "[I]f announcing one's views in the context of a campaign for the State Supreme Court might be" protected speech, ibid., then—even if announcing one's views in the context of a campaign for a lower court were *not* protected speech, *ibid.*—the announce clause would not be narrowly tailored, since it applies to high-and low-court candidates alike. In fact, however, the judges of inferior courts *often* "make law," since the precedent of the highest court does not cover every situation, and not every case is reviewed. Justice STEVENS has repeatedly expressed the view that a settled course of lower court opinions binds the highest court. See, *e.g.*, *Reves v. Ernst & Young*, 494 U.S. 56, 74, 110 S.Ct. 945, 108 L. Ed. 2d 47 (1990) (concurring opinion); *McNally v. United States*, 483 U.S. 350, 376-377, 107 S.Ct. 2875, 97 L. Ed. 2d 292 (1987) (dissenting opinion).

At the time of the founding, only Vermont (before it became a State) selected any of its judges by election. Starting with Georgia in 1812, States began to provide for judicial election, a development rapidly accelerated by Jacksonian democracy. By the time of the Civil War, the great majority of States elected their judges. E. Haynes, Selection and Tenure of Judges 99-135 (1944); Berkson, Judicial Selection in the United States: A Special Report, 64 Judicature 176 (1980). We know of no restrictions upon statements that could be made by judicial candidates (including judges) throughout the 19th and the first quarter of the 20th century. Indeed, judicial elections were generally partisan during this period, the movement toward nonpartisan judicial elections not even beginning until the 1870's. *Id.*, at 176-177; M. Comisky & P. Patterson, The Judiciary—Selection, Compensation, Ethics, and Discipline 4, 7 (1987). Thus, not only were judicial candidates (including judges) discussing disputed legal and political issues on the campaign trail, but they were touting party affiliations and angling for party nominations all the while.

The first code regulating judicial conduct was adopted by the ABA in 1924. 48 ABA Reports 74 (1923) (report of Chief Justice Taft); P. McFadden, Electing Justice: The Law and Ethics of Judicial Election Campaigns 86 (1990). It contained a provision akin to the announce clause: "A candidate for judicial position . . . should not announce in advance his conclusions of law on disputed issues to secure class support . . . ." ABA Canon of Judicial Ethics 30 (1924). The States were slow to adopt the canons, however. "By the end of World War II, the canons . . . were binding by the bar associations or supreme courts of only eleven states." J. MacKenzie, The Appearance of Justice 191 (1974). Even today, although a majority of States have adopted either the announce clause or its 1990 ABA successor, adoption is not unanimous. Of the 31 States that select some or all of their appellate and general-jurisdiction judges by election, see

American Judicature Society, Judicial Selection in the States: Appellate and General Jurisdiction Courts (Apr. 2002), 4 have adopted no candidate-speech restriction comparable to the announce clause,[13] and 1 prohibits only the discussion of "pending litigation."[14] This practice, relatively new to judicial elections and still not universally adopted, does not compare well with the traditions deemed worthy of our attention in prior cases. *E.g., Burson v. Freeman*, 504 U.S. 191, 205-206, 112 S.Ct. 1846, 119 L. Ed. 2d 5 (1992) (crediting tradition of prohibiting speech around polling places that began with the very adoption of the secret ballot in the late 19th century, and in which every State participated); *id.*, at 214-216, 112 S.Ct. 1846 (SCALIA, J., concurring in judgment) (same); *McIntyre*, *supra*, at 375-377, 115 S.Ct. 1511 (SCALIA, J., dissenting) (crediting tradition of prohibiting anonymous election literature, which again began in 1890 and was universally adopted).

* * *

There is an obvious tension between the article of Minnesota's popularly approved Constitution which provides that judges shall be elected, and the Minnesota Supreme Court's announce clause which places most subjects of interest to the voters off limits. (The candidate-speech restrictions of all the other States that have them are also the product of judicial fiat.[15]) The disparity is perhaps unsur-

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[13] Idaho Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 7 (2001); Mich. Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 7 (2002); N.C. Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 7 (2001); Ore. Code of Judicial Conduct, Rule 4-102 (2002). All of these States save Idaho have adopted the pledges or promises clause.

[14] Ala. Canon of Judicial Ethics 7(B)(1)(c) (2002).

[15] These restrictions are all contained in these States' codes of judicial conduct, App. to Brief for ABA as *Amicus Curiae*. "In every state, the highest court promulgates the Code of Judicial Conduct, either by express constitutional provision, statutory authorization, broad constitutional grant, or inherent power." In the Supreme

prising, since the ABA, which originated the announce clause, has long been an opponent of judicial elections. See ABA Model Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 5(C)(2), Comment (2000) ("[M]erit selection of judges is a preferable manner in which to select the judiciary"); An Independent Judiciary: Report of the ABA Commission on Separation of Powers and Judicial Independence 96 (1997) ("The American Bar Association strongly endorses the merit selection of judges, as opposed to their election .... Five times between August 1972 and August 1984 the House of Delegates has approved recommendations stating the preference for merit selection and encouraging bar associations in jurisdictions where judges are elected ... to work for the adoption of merit selection and retention"). That opposition may be well taken (it certainly had the support of the Founders of the Federal Government), but the First Amendment does not permit it to achieve its goal by leaving the principle of elections in place while preventing candidates from discussing what the elections are about. "[T]he greater power to dispense with elections altogether does not include the lesser power to conduct elections under conditions of state-imposed voter ignorance. If the State chooses to tap the energy and the legitimizing power of the democratic process, it must accord the participants in that process ... the First Amendment rights that attach to their roles." *Renne v. Geary*, 501 U.S. 312, 349, 111 S.Ct. 2331, 115 L. Ed. 2d 288 (1991) (Marshall, J., dissenting); accord, *Meyer v. Grant*, 486 U.S. 414, 424-425, 108 S.Ct. 1886, 100 L. Ed. 2d 425 (1988) (rejecting argument that the greater power to end voter initiatives includes the lesser power to prohibit paid petition-circulators).

Court of Texas: Per Curiam Opinion Concerning Amendments to Canons 5 and 6 of the Code of Judicial Conduct, 61 Tex. B.J. 64, 66 (1998) (collecting provisions).

The Minnesota Supreme Court's canon of judicial conduct prohibiting candidates for judicial election from announcing their views on disputed legal and political issues violates the First Amendment. Accordingly, we reverse the grant of summary judgment to respondents and remand the case for proceedings consistent with this opinion.

It is so ordered.

Justice O'CONNOR, concurring.

I join the opinion of the Court but write separately to express my concerns about judicial elections generally. Respondents claim that "[t]he Announce Clause is necessary . . . to protect the State's compelling governmental interes[t] in an actual and perceived . . . impartial judiciary." Brief for Respondents 8. I am concerned that, even aside from what judicial candidates may say while campaigning, the very practice of electing judges undermines this interest.

We of course want judges to be impartial, in the sense of being free from any personal stake in the outcome of the cases to which they are assigned. But if judges are subject to regular elections they are likely to feel that they have at least some personal stake in the outcome of every publicized case. Elected judges cannot help being aware that if the public is not satisfied with the outcome of a particular case, it could hurt their reelection prospects. See Eule, Crocodiles in the Bathtub: State Courts, Voter Initiatives and the Threat of Electoral Reprisal, 65 U. Colo. L. Rev. 733, 739 (1994) (quoting former California Supreme Court Justice Otto Kaus' statement that ignoring the political consequences of visible decisions is "'like ignoring a crocodile in your bathtub'"); Bright & Keenan, Judges and the Politics of Death: Deciding Between the Bill of Rights and the Next Election in Capital Cases, 75 B.U.L. Rev. 759, 793-794 (1995) (citing statistics indicating that judges who face elections are far more likely to override jury sentences of

life without parole and impose the death penalty than are judges who do not run for election). Even if judges were able to suppress their awareness of the potential electoral consequences of their decisions and refrain from acting on it, the public's confidence in the judiciary could be undermined simply by the possibility that judges would be unable to do so.

Moreover, contested elections generally entail campaigning. And campaigning for a judicial post today can require substantial funds. See Schotland, Financing Judicial Elections, 2000: Change and Challenge, 2001 L. Rev. Mich. State U. Detroit College of Law 849, 866 (reporting that in 2000, the 13 candidates in a partisan election for 5 seats on the Alabama Supreme Court spent an average of $1,092,076 on their campaigns); American Bar Association, Report and Recommendations of the Task Force on Lawyers' Political Contributions, pt. 2 (July 1998) (reporting that in 1995, one candidate for the Pennsylvania Supreme Court raised $1,848,142 in campaign funds, and that in 1986, $2,700,000 was spent on the race for Chief Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court). Unless the pool of judicial candidates is limited to those wealthy enough to independently fund their campaigns, a limitation unrelated to judicial skill, the cost of campaigning requires judicial candidates to engage in fundraising. Yet relying on campaign donations may leave judges feeling indebted to certain parties or interest groups. See Thomas, National L. J., Mar. 16, 1998, p. A8, col. 1 (reporting that a study by the public interest group Texans for Public Justice found that 40 percent of the $9,200,000 in contributions of $100 or more raised by seven of Texas' nine Supreme Court justices for their 1994 and 1996 elections "came from parties and lawyers with cases before the court or contributors closely linked to these parties"). Even if judges were able to refrain from favoring donors, the mere possibility that judges' decisions may be motivated by the desire to repay campaign

contributors is likely to undermine the public's confidence in the judiciary. See Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, Inc., and American Viewpoint, National Public Opinion Survey Frequency Questionnaire 4 (2001) (available at http://www.justiceatstake.org/files/JASNationalSurvey Results.pdf) (describing survey results indicating that 76 percent of registered voters believe that campaign contributions influence judicial decisions); *id.*, at 7 (describing survey results indicating that two-thirds of registered voters believe individuals and groups who give money to judicial candidates often receive favorable treatment); Barnhizer, "On the Make": Campaign Funding and the Corrupting of the American Judiciary, 50 Cath. U. L. Rev. 361, 379 (2001) (relating anecdotes of lawyers who felt that their contributions to judicial campaigns affected their chance of success in court).

Despite these significant problems, 39 States currently employ some form of judicial elections for their appellate courts, general jurisdiction trial courts, or both. American Judicature Society, Judicial Selection in the States: Appellate and General Jurisdiction Courts (Apr. 2002). Judicial elections were not always so prevalent. The first 29 States of the Union adopted methods for selecting judges that did not involve popular elections. See Croley, The Majoritarian Difficulty: Elective Judiciaries and the Rule of Law, 62 U. Chi. L. Rev. 689, 716 (1995). As the Court explains, however, beginning with Georgia in 1812, States began adopting systems for judicial elections. See *ante*, at 2540 [142a]. From the 1830's to the 1850's, as part of the Jacksonian movement toward greater popular control of public office, this trend accelerated, see Goldschmidt, Merit Selection: Current Status, Procedures, and Issues, 49 U. Miami L. Rev. 1, 5 (1994), and by the Civil War, 22 of the 34 States elected their judges, *ibid.* By the beginning of the 20th century, however, elected judiciaries increasingly came to be viewed as incompetent and corrupt, and criticism of

partisan judicial elections mounted. Croley, *supra*, at 723. In 1906, Roscoe Pound gave a speech to the American Bar Association in which he claimed that "compelling judges to become politicians, in many jurisdictions has almost destroyed the traditional respect for the bench." The Causes of Popular Dissatisfaction with the Administration of Justice, 8 Baylor L. Rev. 1, 23 (1956) (reprinting Pound's speech).

In response to such concerns, some States adopted a modified system of judicial selection that became known as the Missouri Plan (because Missouri was the first State to adopt it for most of its judicial posts). See Croley, 62 U. Chi. L. Rev., at 724. Under the Missouri Plan, judges are appointed by a high elected official, generally from a list of nominees put together by a nonpartisan nominating commission, and then subsequently stand for unopposed retention elections in which voters are asked whether the judges should be recalled. *Ibid.* If a judge is recalled, the vacancy is filled through a new nomination and appointment. *Ibid.* This system obviously reduces threats to judicial impartiality, even if it does not elimir.ate all popular pressure on judges. See Grodin, Developing a Consensus of Constraint: A Judge's Perspective on Judicial Retention Elections, 61 S. Cal. L. Rev. 1969, 1980 (1988) (admitting that he cannot be sure that his votes as a California Supreme Court Justice in "critical cases" during 1986 were not influenced subconsciously by his awareness that the outcomes could affect his chances in the retention elections being conducted that year). The Missouri Plan is currently used to fill at least some judicial offices in 15 States. Croley, *supra*, at 725-726; American Judicature Society, *supra*.

Thirty-one States, however, still use popular elections to select some or all of their appellate and/or general jurisdiction trial court judges, who thereafter run for reelection periodically. *Ibid.* Of these, slightly more than half use nonpartisan elections, and the rest use partisan elections.

Ibid. Most of the States that do not have any form of judicial elections choose judges through executive nomination and legislative confirmation. See Croley, *supra*, at 725.

Minnesota has chosen to select its judges through contested popular elections instead of through an appointment system or a combined appointment and retention election system along the lines of the Missouri Plan. In doing so the State has voluntarily taken on the risks to judicial bias described above. As a result, the State's claim that it needs to significantly restrict judges' speech in order to protect judicial impartiality is particularly troubling. If the State has a problem with judicial impartiality, it is largely one the State brought upon itself by continuing the practice of popularly electing judges.

Justice KENNEDY, concurring.

I agree with the Court that Minnesota's prohibition on judicial candidates' announcing their legal views is an unconstitutional abridgment of the freedom of speech. There is authority for the Court to apply strict scrutiny analysis to resolve some First Amendment cases, see, *e.g.*, *Simon & Schuster, Inc. v. Members of N.Y. State Crime Victims Bd.*, 502 U.S. 105, 112 S.Ct. 501, 116 L. Ed. 2d 476 (1991), and the Court explains in clear and forceful terms why the Minnesota regulatory scheme fails that test. So I join its opinion.

I adhere to my view, however, that content-based speech restrictions that do not fall within any traditional exception should be invalidated without inquiry into narrow tailoring or compelling government interests. The speech at issue here does not come within any of the exceptions to the First Amendment recognized by the Court. "Here, a law is directed to speech alone where the speech in question is not obscene, not defamatory, not words tantamount to an act otherwise criminal, not an impairment of some other constitutional right, not an incitement to lawless action, and

not calculated or likely to bring about imminent harm the State has the substantive power to prevent. No further inquiry is necessary to reject the State's argument that the statute should be upheld." *Id.*, at 124, 112 S.Ct. 501 (KENNEDY, J., concurring in judgment). The political speech of candidates is at the heart of the First Amendment, and direct restrictions on the content of candidate speech are simply beyond the power of government to impose.

Here, Minnesota has sought to justify its speech restriction as one necessary to maintain the integrity of its judiciary. Nothing in the Court's opinion should be read to cast doubt on the vital importance of this state interest. Courts, in our system, elaborate principles of law in the course of resolving disputes. The power and the prerogative of a court to perform this function rest, in the end, upon the respect accorded to its judgments. The citizen's respect for judgments depends in turn upon the issuing court's absolute probity. Judicial integrity is, in consequence, a state interest of the highest order.

Articulated standards of judicial conduct may advance this interest. See Shepard, Campaign Speech: Restraint and Liberty in Judicial Ethics, 9 Geo. J. Legal Ethics 1059 (1996). To comprehend, then to codify, the essence of judicial integrity is a hard task, however. "The work of deciding cases goes on every day in hundreds of courts throughout the land. Any judge, one might suppose, would find it easy to describe the process which he had followed a thousand times and more. Nothing could be farther from the truth." B. Cardozo, The Nature of the Judicial Process 9 (1921). Much the same can be said of explicit standards to ensure judicial integrity. To strive for judicial integrity is the work of a lifetime. That should not dissuade the profession. The difficulty of the undertaking does not mean we should refrain from the attempt. Explicit standards of judicial conduct provide essential guidance for judges in the

proper discharge of their duties and the honorable conduct of their office. The legislative bodies, judicial committees, and professional associations that promulgate those standards perform a vital public service. See, *e.g.*, Administrative Office of U.S. Courts, Code of Judicial Conduct for United States Judges (1999). Yet these standards may not be used by the State to abridge the speech of aspiring judges in a judicial campaign.

Minnesota may choose to have an elected judiciary. It may strive to define those characteristics that exemplify judicial excellence. It may enshrine its definitions in a code of judicial conduct. It may adopt recusal standards more rigorous than due process requires, and censure judges who violate these standards. What Minnesota may not do, however, is censor what the people hear as they undertake to decide for themselves which candidate is most likely to be an exemplary judicial officer. Deciding the relevance of candidate speech is the right of the voters, not the State. See *Brown v. Hartlage*, 456 U.S. 45, 60, 102 S.Ct. 1523, 71 L. Ed. 2d 732 (1982). The law in question here contradicts the principle that unabridged speech is the foundation of political freedom.

The State of Minnesota no doubt was concerned, as many citizens and thoughtful commentators are concerned, that judicial campaigns in an age of frenetic fundraising and mass media may foster disrespect for the legal system. Indeed, from the beginning there have been those who believed that the rough-and-tumble of politics would bring our governmental institutions into ill repute. And some have sought to cure this tendency with governmental restrictions on political speech. See Sedition Act of 1798, ch. 74, 1 Stat. 596. Cooler heads have always recognized, however, that these measures abridge the freedom of speech—not because the state interest is insufficiently compelling, but simply because content-based restrictions on political speech are "'expressly and positively forbidden by'" the

First Amendment. See *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, 376 U.S. 254, 274, 84 S.Ct. 710, 11 L. Ed. 2d 686 (1964) (quoting the Virginia Resolutions of 1798). The State cannot opt for an elected judiciary and then assert that its democracy, in order to work as desired, compels the abridgment of speech.

If Minnesota believes that certain sorts of candidate speech disclose flaws in the candidate's credentials, democracy and free speech are their own correctives. The legal profession, the legal academy, the press, voluntary groups, political and civic leaders, and all interested citizens can use their own First Amendment freedoms to protest statements inconsistent with standards of judicial neutrality and judicial excellence. Indeed, if democracy is to fulfill its promise, they must do so. They must reach voters who are uninterested or uninformed or blinded by partisanship, and they must urge upon the voters a higher and better understanding of the judicial function and a stronger commitment to preserving its finest traditions. Free elections and free speech are a powerful combination: Together they may advance our understanding of the rule of law and further a commitment to its precepts.

There is general consensus that the design of the Federal Constitution, including lifetime tenure and appointment by nomination and confirmation, has preserved the independence of the Federal Judiciary. In resolving this case, however, we should refrain from criticism of the State's choice to use open elections to select those persons most likely to achieve judicial excellence. States are free to choose this mechanism rather than, say, appointment and confirmation. By condemning judicial elections across the board, we implicitly condemn countless elected state judges and without warrant. Many of them, despite the difficulties imposed by the election system, have discovered in the law the enlightenment, instruction, and inspiration that make them independent-minded and faithful jurists of real inte-

grity. We should not, even by inadvertence, "impute to judges a lack of firmness, wisdom, or honor." *Bridges v. California*, 314 U.S. 252, 273, 62 S.Ct. 190, 86 L. Ed. 192 (1941).

These considerations serve but to reinforce the conclusion that Minnesota's regulatory scheme is flawed. By abridging speech based on its content, Minnesota impeaches its own system of free and open elections. The State may not regulate the content of candidate speech merely because the speakers are candidates. This case does not present the question whether a State may restrict the speech of judges because they are judges—for example, as part of a code of judicial conduct; the law at issue here regulates judges only when and because they are candidates. Whether the rationale of *Pickering v. Board of Ed. of Township High School Dist. 205, Will Cty.*, 391 U.S. 563, 568, 88 S.Ct. 1731, 20 L. Ed. 2d 811 (1968), and *Connick v. Myers*, 461 U.S. 138, 103 S.Ct. 1684, 75 L. Ed. 2d 708 (1983), could be extended to allow a general speech restriction on sitting judges—regardless of whether they are campaigning—in order to promote the efficient administration of justice, is not an issue raised here.

Petitioner Gregory Wersal was not a sitting judge but a challenger; he had not voluntarily entered into an employment relationship with the State or surrendered any First Amendment rights. His speech may not be controlled or abridged in this manner. Even the undoubted interest of the State in the excellence of its judiciary does not allow it to restrain candidate speech by reason of its content. Minnesota's attempt to regulate campaign speech is impermissible.

Justice STEVENS, with whom Justice SOUTER, Justice GINSBURG, and Justice BREYER join, dissenting.

In her dissenting opinion, Justice GINSBURG has cogently explained why the Court's holding is unsound. I

therefore join her opinion without reservation. I add these comments to emphasize the force of her arguments and to explain why I find the Court's reasoning even more troubling than its holding. The limits of the Court's holding are evident: Even if the Minnesota Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board (Board) may not sanction a judicial candidate for announcing his views on issues likely to come before him, it may surely advise the electorate that such announcements demonstrate the speaker's unfitness for judicial office. If the solution to harmful speech must be more speech, so be it. The Court's reasoning, however, will unfortunately endure beyond the next election cycle. By obscuring the fundamental distinction between campaigns for the judiciary and the political branches, and by failing to recognize the difference between statements made in articles or opinions and those made on the campaign trail, the Court defies any sensible notion of the judicial office and the importance of impartiality in that context.

The Court's disposition rests on two seriously flawed premises—an inaccurate appraisal of the importance of judicial independence and impartiality, and an assumption that judicial candidates should have the same freedom "'to express themselves on matters of current public importance'" as do all other elected officials. *Ante*, at 2538 [138a]. Elected judges, no less than appointed judges, occupy an office of trust that is fundamentally different from that occupied by policymaking officials. Although the fact that they must stand for election makes their job more difficult than that of the tenured judge, that fact does not lessen their duty to respect essential attributes of the judicial office that have been embedded in Anglo-American law for centuries.

There is a critical difference between the work of the judge and the work of other public officials. In a democracy, issues of policy are properly decided by majority vote; it is the business of legislators and executives to be

popular. But in litigation, issues of law or fact should not be determined by popular vote; it is the business of judges to be indifferent to unpopularity. Sir Matthew Hale pointedly described this essential attribute of the judicial office in words which have retained their integrity for centuries:

> "'11. That popular or court applause or distaste have no influence in anything I do, in point of distribution of justice.
>
> "'12. Not to be solicitous what men will say or think, so long as I keep myself exactly according to the rule of justice.'"[1]

Consistent with that fundamental attribute of the office, countless judges in countless cases routinely make rulings that are unpopular and surely disliked by at least 50 percent of the litigants who appear before them. It is equally common for them to enforce rules that they think unwise, or that are contrary to their personal predilections. For this reason, opinions that a lawyer may have expressed before becoming a judge, or a judicial candidate, do not disqualify anyone for judicial service because every good judge is fully aware of the distinction between the law and a personal point of view. It is equally clear, however, that such expressions after a lawyer has been nominated to judicial office shed little, if any, light on his capacity for judicial service. Indeed, to the extent that such statements seek to enhance the popularity of the candidate by indicating how he would rule in specific cases if elected, they evidence a lack of fitness for the office.

Of course, any judge who faces reelection may believe that he retains his office only so long as his decisions are popular. Nevertheless, the elected judge, like the lifetime appointee, does not serve a constituency while holding that

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[1] 2 J. Campbell, Lives of the Chief Justices of England 208 (1873) (quoting Hale's Rules For His Judicial Guidance, Things Necessary to be Continually Had in Remembrance).

office. He has a duty to uphold the law and to follow the dictates of the Constitution. If he is not a judge on the highest court in the State, he has an obligation to follow the precedent of that court, not his personal views or public opinion polls.[2] He may make common law, but judged on the merits of individual cases, not as a mandate from the voters.

By recognizing a conflict between the demands of electoral politics and the distinct characteristics of the judi-

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[2] The Court largely ignores the fact that judicial elections are not limited to races for the highest court in the State. Even if announcing one's views in the context of a campaign for the State Supreme Court might be permissible, the same statements are surely less appropriate when one is running for an intermediate or trial court judgeship. Such statements not only display a misunderstanding of the judicial role, but also mislead the voters by giving them the false impression that a candidate for the trial court will be able to and should decide cases based on his personal views rather than precedent.

Indeed, the Court's entire analysis has a hypothetical quality to it that stems, in part, from the fact that no candidate has yet been sanctioned for violating the announce clause. The one complaint filed against petitioner Gregory Wersal for campaign materials during his 1996 election run was dismissed by the Board. App. 16-21. Moreover, when Wersal sought an advisory opinion during his 1998 campaign, the Board could not evaluate his request because he had "not specified what statement [he] would make that may or may not be a view on a disputed, legal or political issue." *Id.*, at 32. Since Wersal failed to provide examples of statements he wished to make, and because the Board had its own doubts about the constitutionality of the announce clause, it advised Wersal that "unless the speech at issue violates other prohibitions listed in Canon 5 or other portions of the Code of Judicial Conduct, it is our belief that this section is not, as written, constitutionally enforceable." *Ibid.* Consequently, the Court is left to decide a question of great constitutional importance in a case in which either the petitioner's statements were not subject to the prohibition in question, or he neglected to supply any concrete examples of statements he wished to make, and the Board refused to enforce the prohibition because of its own constitutional concerns.

ciary, we do not have to put States to an all or nothing choice of abandoning judicial elections or having elections in which anything goes. As a practical matter, we cannot know for sure whether an elected judge's decisions are based on his interpretation of the law or political expediency. In the absence of reliable evidence one way or the other, a State may reasonably presume that elected judges are motivated by the highest aspirations of their office. But we do know that a judicial candidate, who announces his views in the context of a campaign, is effectively telling the electorate: "Vote for me because I believe X, and I will judge cases accordingly." Once elected, he may feel free to disregard his campaign statements, *ante*, at 2537-2538 [136a-137a], but that does not change the fact that the judge announced his position on an issue likely to come before him *as a reason to vote for him.* Minnesota has a compelling interest in sanctioning such statements.

A candidate for judicial office who goes beyond the expression of "general observation about the law . . . in order to obtain favorable consideration" of his candidacy, *Laird v. Tatum*, 409 U.S. 824, 836, n. 5, 93 S.Ct. 7, 34 L. Ed. 2d 50 (1972) (memorandum of REHNQUIST, J., on motion for recusal), demonstrates either a lack of impartiality or a lack of understanding of the importance of maintaining public confidence in the impartiality of the judiciary. It is only by failing to recognize the distinction, clearly stated by then-Justice REHNQUIST, between statements made during a campaign or confirmation hearing and those made before announcing one's candidacy, that the Court is able to conclude: "[S]ince avoiding judicial preconceptions on legal issues is neither possible nor desirable, pretending otherwise by attempting to preserve the 'appearance' of that type of impartiality can hardly be a compelling state interest either," *ante*, at 2536 [133a].

Even when "impartiality" is defined in its narrowest sense to embrace only "the lack of bias for or against either

party to the proceeding," *ante*, at 2535 [131a], the announce clause serves that interest. Expressions that stress a candidate's unbroken record of affirming convictions for rape,[3] for example, imply a bias in favor of a particular litigant (the prosecutor) and against a class of litigants (defendants in rape cases). Contrary to the Court's reasoning in its first attempt to define impartiality, *ante*, at 2535 [131a], an interpretation of the announce clause that prohibits such statements serves the State's interest in maintaining both the appearance of this form of impartiality and its actuality.

When the Court evaluates the importance of impartiality in its broadest sense, which it describes as "the interest in openmindedness, or at least in the appearance of, open-mindedness" *ante*, at 2536 [134a], it concludes that the announce clause is "so woefully underinclusive as to render belief in that purpose a challenge to the credulous," *ante*, at 2537 [136a]. It is underinclusive, in the Court's view, because campaign statements are an infinitesimal portion of the public commitments to legal positions that candidates make during their professional careers. It is not, however, the number of legal views that a candidate may have formed or discussed in his prior career that is significant. Rather, it is the ability both to reevaluate them in the light of an adversarial presentation, and to apply the governing rule of law even when inconsistent with those views, that characterize judicial open-mindedness.

The Court boldly asserts that respondents have failed to carry their burden of demonstrating "that campaign statements are uniquely destructive of open-mindedness," *ante*, at 2538 [137a]. But the very purpose of most statements prohibited by the announce clause is to convey the message that the candidate's mind is not open on a particular issue.

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[3] See *Buckley v. Illinois Judicial Inquiry Bd.*, 997 F.2d 224, 226 (C.A.7 1993).

The lawyer who writes an article advocating harsher penalties for polluters surely does not commit to that position to the same degree as the candidate who says "vote for me because I believe all polluters deserve harsher penalties." At the very least, such statements obscure the appearance of open-mindedness. More importantly, like the reasoning in the Court's opinion, they create the false impression that the standards for the election of political candidates apply equally to candidates for judicial office.[1]

The Court seems to have forgotten its prior evaluation of the importance of maintaining public confidence in the "disinterestedness" of the judiciary. Commenting on the danger that participation by judges in a political assignment might erode that public confidence, we wrote: "While the problem of individual bias is usually cured through recusal, no such mechanism can overcome the appearance of institutional partiality that may arise from judiciary involvement in the making of policy. The legitimacy of the Judicial Branch ultimately depends on its reputation for impartiality and nonpartisanship. That reputation may not be borrowed by the political Branches to cloak their work in the neutral colors of judicial action." *Mistretta v. United States*, 488 U.S. 361, 407, 109 S.Ct. 647, 102 L. Ed. 2d 714 (1989).

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[1] Justice KENNEDY would go even further and hold that no content-based restriction of a judicial candidate's speech is permitted under the First Amendment. *Ante*, at 2544 [149a-150a] (concurring opinion). While he does not say so explicitly, this extreme position would preclude even Minnesota's prohibition against "pledges or promises" by a candidate for judicial office. Minn. Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 5(A)(3)(d)(i) (2002). A candidate could say "vote for me because I promise to never reverse a rape conviction," and the Board could do nothing to formally sanction that candidate. The unwisdom of this proposal illustrates why the same standards should not apply to speech in campaigns for judicial and legislative office.

Conversely, the judicial reputation for impartiality and open-mindedness is compromised by electioneering that emphasizes the candidate's personal predilections rather than his qualifications for judicial office. As an elected judge recently noted:

> "Informed criticism of court rulings, or of the professional or personal conduct of judges, should play an important role in maintaining judicial accountability. However, attacking courts and judges—not because they are wrong on the law or the facts of a case, but because the decision is considered wrong simply as a matter of political judgment—maligns one of the basic tenets of judicial independence—intellectual honesty and dedication to enforcement of the rule of law regardless of popular sentiment. Dedication to the rule of law requires judges to rise above the political moment in making judicial decisions. What is so troubling about criticism of court rulings and individual judges based solely on political disagreement with the outcome is that it evidences a fundamentally misguided belief that the judicial branch should operate and be treated just like another constituency-driven political arm of government. Judges should not have 'political constituencies.' Rather, a judge's fidelity must be to enforcement of the rule of law regardless of perceived popular will." De Muniz, Politicizing State Judicial Elections: A Threat to Judicial Independence, 38 Willamette L. Rev. 367, 387 (2002).

The disposition of this case on the flawed premise that the criteria for the election to judicial office should mirror the rules applicable to political elections is profoundly misguided. I therefore respectfully dissent.

Justice GINSBURG, with whom Justice STEVENS, Justice SOUTER, and Justice BREYER join, dissenting.

Whether state or federal, elected or appointed, judges perform a function fundamentally different from that of the people's elected representatives. Legislative and executive officials act on behalf of the voters who placed them in office; "judge[s] represen[t] the Law." *Chisom v. Roemer*, 501 U.S. 380, 411, 111 S.Ct. 2354, 115 L. Ed. 2d 348 (1991) (SCALIA, J., dissenting). Unlike their counterparts in the political branches, judges are expected to refrain from catering to particular constituencies or committing themselves on controversial issues in advance of adversarial presentation. Their mission is to decide "individual cases and controversies" on individual records, *Plaut v. Spendthrift Farm, Inc.*, 514 U.S. 211, 266, 115 S.Ct. 1447, 131 L. Ed. 2d 328 (1995) (STEVENS, J., dissenting), neutrally applying legal principles, and, when necessary, "stand[ing] up to what is generally supreme in a democracy: the popular will," Scalia, The Rule of Law as a Law of Rules, 56 U. Chi. L. Rev. 1175, 1180 (1989).

A judiciary capable of performing this function, owing fidelity to no person or party, is a "longstanding Anglo-American tradition," *United States v. Will*, 449 U.S. 200, 217, 101 S.Ct. 471, 66 L. Ed. 2d 392 (1980), an essential bulwark of constitutional government, a constant guardian of the rule of law. The guarantee of an independent, impartial judiciary enables society to "withdraw certain subjects from the vicissitudes of political controversy, to place them beyond the reach of majorities and officials and to establish them as legal principles to be applied by the courts." *West Virginia Bd. of Ed. v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624, 638, 63 S.Ct. 1178, 87 L. Ed. 1628 (1943). "Without this, all the reservations of particular rights or privileges would amount to nothing." The Federalist No. 78, 466 (C. Rossiter ed. 1961).

The ability of the judiciary to discharge its uniq[illegible]role rests to a large degree on the manner in which judges are selected. The Framers of the Federal Constitution sought

to advance the judicial function through the structural protections of Article III, which provide for the selection of judges by the President on the advice and consent of the Senate, generally for lifetime terms. Through its own Constitution, Minnesota, in common with most other States, has decided to allow its citizens to choose judges directly in periodic elections. But Minnesota has not thereby opted to install a corps of political actors on the bench; rather, it has endeavored to preserve the integrity of its judiciary by other means. Recognizing that the influence of political parties is incompatible with the judge's role, for example, Minnesota has designated all judicial elections nonpartisan. *See Peterson v. Stafford*, 490 N.W.2d 418, 425 (Minn. 1992). And it has adopted a provision, here called the Announce Clause, designed to prevent candidates for judicial office from "publicly making known how they would decide issues likely to come before them as judges." *Republican Party of Minn. v. Kelly*, 247 F.3d 854, 881-882 (C.A.8 2001).

The question this case presents is whether the First Amendment stops Minnesota from furthering its interest in judicial integrity through this precisely targeted speech restriction.

I

The speech restriction must fail, in the Court's view, because an electoral process is at stake; if Minnesota opts to elect its judges, the Court asserts, the State may not rein in what candidates may say. See *ante*, at 2538 [137a] (notion that "right to speak out on disputed issues" may be abridged in an election context "sets our First Amendment jurisprudence on its head"); *ante*, at 2541 [144a] (power to dispense with elections does not include power to curtail candidate speech if State leaves election process in place); 247 F.3d, at 897 (Beam, J., dissenting) ("[W]hen a state opts to hold an election, it must commit itself to a complete election, replete with free speech and association."); *id.*, at 903 (same).

I do not agree with this unilocular, "an election is an election," approach. Instead, I would differentiate elections for political offices, in which the First Amendment holds full sway, from elections designed to select those whose office it is to administer justice without respect to persons. Minnesota's choice to elect its judges, I am persuaded, does not preclude the State from installing an election process geared to the judicial office.

Legislative and executive officials serve in representative capacities. They are agents of the people; their primary function is to advance the interests of their constituencies. Candidates for political offices, in keeping with their representative role, must be left free to inform the electorate of their positions on specific issues. Armed with such information, the individual voter will be equipped to cast her ballot intelligently, to vote for the candidate committed to positions the voter approves. Campaign statements committing the candidate to take sides on contentious issues are therefore not only appropriate in political elections; they are "at the core of our electoral process," *Williams v. Rhodes*, 393 U.S. 23, 32, 89 S.Ct. 5, 21 L. Ed. 2d 24 (1968), for they "enhance the accountability of government officials to the people whom they represent," *Brown v. Hartlage*, 456 U.S. 45, 55, 102 S.Ct. 1523, 71 L. Ed. 2d 732 (1982).

Judges, however, are not political actors. They do not sit as representatives of particular persons, communities, or parties; they serve no faction or constituency. "[I]t is the business of judges to be indifferent to popularity." *Chisom*, 501 U.S., at 401, n. 29, 111 S.Ct. 2354 (internal quotation marks omitted). They must strive to do what is legally right, all the more so when the result is not the one "the home crowd" wants. Rehnquist, Dedicatory Address: Act Well Your Part: Therein All Honor Lies, 7 Pepperdine L. Rev. 227, 229-300 (1980). Even when they develop common law or give concrete meaning to constitutional text,

judges act only in the context of individual cases, the outcome of which cannot depend on the will of the public. See *Barnette*, 319 U.S., at 638, 63 S.Ct. 1178 ("One's right to life, liberty, and property, to free speech, a free press, freedom of worship and assembly, and other fundamental rights may not be submitted to vote; they depend on the outcome of no elections.").

Thus, the rationale underlying unconstrained speech in elections for political office—that representative government depends on the public's ability to choose agents who will act at its behest—does not carry over to campaigns for the bench. As to persons aiming to occupy the seat of judgment, the Court's unrelenting reliance on decisions involving contests for legislative and executive posts is manifestly out of place. *E.g.*, *ante*, at 2538 [138a] (quoting *Wood v. Georgia*, 370 U.S. 375, 395, 82 S.Ct. 1364, 8 L. Ed. 2d 569 (1962) ("*The role that elected officials play in our society* makes it all the more imperative that they be allowed freely to express themselves on matters of current public importance." (Emphasis added.))). See O'Neil, The Canons in the Courts: Recent First Amendment Rulings, 35 Ind. L. Rev. 701, 717 (2002) (reliance on cases involving nonjudicial campaigns, particularly *Brown v. Hartlage*, is "grievously misplaced"; "[h]ow any thoughtful judge could derive from that ruling any possible guidance for cases that involve judicial campaign speech seems baffling"). In view of the magisterial role judges must fill in a system of justice, a role that removes them from the partisan fray, States may limit judicial campaign speech by measures impermissible in elections for political office. See *Buckley v. Illinois Judicial Inquiry Bd.*, 997 F.2d 224, 228 (C.A.7 1993) ("Mode of appointment is only one factor that enables distinctions to be made among different kinds of public official. Judges remain different from legislators and executive officials, even when all are elected, in ways that bear on the strength of the state's interest in restricting their freedom of speech.").

The Court sees in this conclusion, and in the Announce Clause that embraces it, "an obvious tension," *ante*, at 2541 [143a]: The Minnesota electorate is permitted to select its judges by popular vote, but is not provided information on "subjects of interest to the voters," *ibid.*—in particular, the voters are not told how the candidate would decide controversial cases or issues if elected. This supposed tension, however, rests on the false premise that by departing from the federal model with respect to who chooses judges, Minnesota necessarily departed from the federal position on the criteria relevant to the exercise of that choice.[1]

The Minnesota Supreme Court thought otherwise:

> "The methods by which the federal system and other states initially select and then elect or retain judges are varied, yet the explicit or implicit goal of the constitutional provisions and enabling legislation is

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[1] In the context of the federal system, how a prospective nominee for the bench would resolve particular contentious issues would certainly be "of interest" to the President and the Senate in the exercise of their respective nomination and confirmation powers, just as information of that type would "interest" a Minnesota voter. But in accord with a longstanding norm, every Member of this Court declined to furnish such information to the Senate, and presumably to the President as well. See Brief for Respondents 17-42 (collecting statements at Senate confirmation hearings). Surely the Court perceives no tension here; the line each of us drew in response to preconfirmation questioning, the Court would no doubt agree, is crucial to the health of the Federal Judiciary. But by the Court's reasoning, the reticence of prospective and current federal judicial nominees dishonors Article II, for it deprives the President and the Senate of information that might aid or advance the decision to nominate or confirm. The point is not, of course, that this "practice of voluntarily demurring" by itself "establish[es] the legitimacy of legal compulsion to demur," *ante*, at 2539 [140a], n. 11 (emphasis deleted). The federal norm simply illustrates that, contrary to the Court's suggestion, there is nothing inherently incongruous in depriving those charged with choosing judges of certain information they might desire during the selection process.

> the same: to create and maintain an independent judiciary as free from political, economic and social pressure as possible so judges can decide cases without those influences." *Peterson*, 490 N.W.2d, at 420.

Nothing in the Court's opinion convincingly explains why Minnesota may not pursue that goal in the manner it did.

Minnesota did not choose a judicial selection system with all the trappings of legislative and executive races. While providing for public participation, it tailored judicial selection to fit the character of third branch office holding. See *id.*, at 425 (Minnesota's system "keep[s] the ultimate choice with the voters while, at the same time, recognizing the unique independent nature of the judicial function."). The balance the State sought to achieve—allowing the people to elect judges, but safeguarding the process so that the integrity of the judiciary would not be compromised—should encounter no First Amendment shoal. See generally O'Neil, *supra*, at 715-723.

II

Proper resolution of this case requires correction of the Court's distorted construction of the provision before us for review. According to the Court, the Announce Clause "prohibits a judicial candidate from stating his views on any specific nonfanciful legal question within the province of the court for which he is running, except in the context of discussing past decisions—and in the latter context as well, if he expresses the view that he is not bound by *stare decisis*." *Ante*, at 2534 [129a]. In two key respects, that construction misrepresents the meaning of the Announce Clause as interpreted by the Eighth Circuit and embraced by the Minnesota Supreme Court, *In re Code of Judicial Conduct*, 639 N.W.2d 55 (Minn. 2002), which has the final word on this matter, see *Hortonville Joint School Dist. No. 1 v. Hortonville Ed. Assn.*, 426 U.S. 482, 488, 96 S.Ct. 2308, 49 L. Ed. 2d 1 (1976) ("We are, of course, bound to

accept the interpretation of [the State's] law by the highest court of the State.").

First and most important, the Court ignores a crucial limiting construction placed on the Announce Clause by the courts below. The provision does not bar a candidate from generally "stating [her] views" on legal questions, *ante*, at 2534 [129a]; it prevents her from "publicly making known how [she] would *decide*" disputed issues, 247 F.3d, at 881-882 (emphasis added). That limitation places beyond the scope of the Announce Clause a wide range of comments that may be highly informative to voters. Consistent with the Eighth Circuit's construction, such comments may include, for example, statements of historical fact ("As a prosecutor, I obtained 15 drunk driving convictions"); qualified statements ("Judges should use *sparingly* their discretion to grant lenient sentences to drunk drivers"); and statements framed at a sufficient level of generality ("Drunk drivers are a threat to the safety of every driver"). What remains within the Announce Clause is the category of statements that essentially commit the candidate to a position on a specific issue, such as "I think all drunk drivers should receive the maximum sentence permitted by law." See Tr. of Oral Arg. 45 (candidate may not say "'I'm going to decide this particular issue this way in the future'").

Second, the Court misportrays the scope of the Clause as applied to a candidate's discussion of past decisions. Citing an apparent concession by respondents at argument, *id.*, at 33-34, the Court concludes that "statements critical of past judicial decisions are not permissible if the candidate also states that he is against *stare decisis*," *ante*, at 2533 [127a] (emphasis deleted). That conclusion, however, draws no force from the meaning attributed to the Announce Clause by the Eighth Circuit. In line with the Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards, the Court of Appeals stated without qualification that the Clause "does not prohibit candidates

from discussing appellate court decisions." 247 F.3d, at 882 (citing Minn. Bd. on Judicial Standards, Informal Opinion, Oct. 10, 1990, App. 55 ("In all election contests, a candidate for judicial office may discuss decisions and opinions of the Appellate courts.")). The Eighth Circuit's controlling construction should not be modified by respondents' on the spot answers to fast-paced hypothetical questions at oral argument. *Moose Lodge No. 107 v. Irvis*, 407 U.S. 163, 170, 92 S.Ct. 1965, 32 L. Ed. 2d 627 (1972) ("We are loath to attach conclusive weight to the relatively spontaneous responses of counsel to equally spontaneous questioning from the Court during oral argument.").

The Announce Clause is thus more tightly bounded, and campaigns conducted under that provision more robust, than the Court acknowledges. Judicial candidates in Minnesota may not only convey general information about themselves, see *ante*, at 2534 [129a-130a], they may also describe their conception of the role of a judge and their views on a wide range of subjects of interest to the voters. See App. 97-103; Brief for Minnesota State Bar Association as *Amicus Curiae* 22-23 (*e.g.*, the criteria for deciding whether to depart from sentencing guidelines, the remedies for racial and gender bias, and the balance between "free speech rights [and] the need to control [hate crimes]" (internal quotation marks omitted)). Further, they may discuss, criticize, or defend past decisions of interest to voters. What candidates may not do—simply or with sophistication—is remove themselves from the constraints characteristic of the judicial office and declare how they would decide an issue, without regard to the particular context in which it is presented, *sans* briefs, oral argument, and, as to an appellate bench, the benefit of one's colleagues' analyses. Properly construed, the Announce Clause prohibits only a discrete subcategory of the statements the Court's misinterpretation encompasses.

The Court's characterization of the Announce Clause as "election-nullifying," *ante*, at 2539 [139a], "plac[ing] most subjects of interest to the voters off limits," *ante*, at 2541 [143a], is further belied by the facts of this case. In his 1996 bid for office, petitioner Gregory Wersal distributed literature sharply criticizing three Minnesota Supreme Court decisions. Of the court's holding in the first case—that certain unrecorded confessions must be suppressed—Wersal asked, "Should we conclude that because the Supreme Court does not trust police, it allows confessed criminals to go free?" App. 37. Of the second case, invalidating a state welfare law, Wersal stated: "The Court should have deferred to the Legislature. It's the Legislature which should set our spending policies." *Ibid.* And of the third case, a decision involving abortion rights, Wersal charged that the court's holding was "directly contrary to the opinion of the U.S. Supreme Court," "unprecedented," and a "pro-abortion stance." *Id.*, at 38.

When a complaint was filed against Wersal on the basis of those statements, *id.*, at 12-15, the Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board concluded that no discipline was warranted, in part because it thought the disputed campaign materials did not violate the Announce Clause, *id.*, at 20-21. And when, at the outset of his 1998 campaign, Wersal sought to avoid the possibility of sanction for future statements, he pursued the option, available to all Minnesota judicial candidates, Tr. of Oral Arg. 12-13, of requesting an advisory opinion concerning the application of the Announce Clause. App. 24-26. In response to that request, the Board indicated that it did not anticipate any adverse action against him. *Id.*, at 31-33.[2] Wersal has thus never

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[2] In deciding not to sanction Wersal for his campaign statements, and again in responding to his inquiry about the application of the Announce Clause, the Board expressed "doubts about the constitutionality of the current Minnesota Canon." App. 20; *id.*, at 32. Those doubts, however, concerned the meaning of the Announce

been sanctioned under the Announce Clause for any campaign statement he made. On the facts before us, in sum, the Announce Clause has hardly stifled the robust communication of ideas and views from judicial candidate to voter.

III

Even as it exaggerates the reach of the Announce Clause, the Court ignores the significance of that provision to the integrated system of judicial campaign regulation Minnesota has developed. Coupled with the Announce Clause in Minnesota's Code of Judicial Conduct is a provision that prohibits candidates from "mak[ing] pledges or promises of conduct in office other than the faithful and impartial performance of the duties of the office." Minn. Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 5(A)(3)(d)(i) (2002). Although the Court is correct that this "pledges or promises" provision is not directly at issue in this case, see *ante*, at 2532, the Court errs in overlooking the interdependence of that prohibition and the one before us. In my view, the constitutionality of the Announce Clause cannot be resolved without an examination of that interaction in light of the interests the pledges or promises provision serves.

A

All parties to this case agree that, whatever the validity of the Announce Clause, the State may constitutionally prohibit judicial candidates from pledging or promising certain results. See Brief for Petitioners Republican Party of Minnesota et al. 36-37; Tr. of Oral Arg. 14-16 (petitioners' acknowledgment that candidates may be barred from making a "pledge or promise of an outcome"); Brief for Respondents 11; see also Brief for Brennan Center for Justice et al. as *Amici Curiae* 23 ("All of the parties and

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Clause before the Eighth Circuit applied, and the Minnesota Supreme Court adopted, the limiting constructions that now define that provision's scope.

amici in this case agree that judges should not make explicit promises or commitments to decide particular cases in a particular manner.").

The reasons for this agreement are apparent. Pledges or promises of conduct in office, however commonplace in races for the political branches, are inconsistent "with the judge's obligation to decide cases in accordance with his or her role." Tr. of Oral Arg. 16; see Brief for Petitioners Republican Party of Minnesota et al. 36 ("[B]ecause [judges] have a duty to decide a case on the basis of the law and facts before them, they can be prohibited, as candidates, from making such promises."). This judicial obligation to avoid prejudgment corresponds to the litigant's right, protected by the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, to "an impartial and disinterested tribunal in both civil and criminal cases," *Marshall v. Jerrico, Inc.*, 446 U.S. 238, 242, 100 S.Ct. 1610, 64 L. Ed. 2d 182 (1980). The proscription against pledges or promises thus represents an accommodation of "constitutionally protected interests [that] lie on both sides of the legal equation." *Nixon v. Shrink Missouri Government PAC*, 528 U.S. 377, 400, 120 S.Ct. 897, 145 L. Ed. 2d 886 (2000) (BREYER, J., concurring). Balanced against the candidate's interest in free expression is the litigant's "powerful and independent constitutional interest in fair adjudicative procedure." *Marshall*, 446 U.S., at 243, 100 S.Ct. 1610; *see Buckley*, 997 F.2d, at 227 ("Two principles are in conflict and must, to the extent possible, be reconciled. ... The roots of both principles lie deep in our constitutional heritage.").

The impartiality guaranteed to litigants through the Due Process Clause adheres to a core principle: "[N]o man is permitted to try cases where he has an interest in the outcome." *In re Murchison*, 349 U.S. 133, 136, 75 S.Ct. 623, 99 L. Ed. 942 (1955). Our cases have "jealously guarded" that basic concept, for it "ensur[es] that no person will be

deprived of his interests in the absence of a proceeding in which he may present his case with assurance that the arbiter is not predisposed to find against him." *Marshall*, 446 U. S, at 242, 100 S.Ct. 1610.

Applying this principle in *Tumey v. Ohio*, 273 U.S. 510, 47 S.Ct. 437, 71 L. Ed. 749 (1927), we held that due process was violated where a judge received a portion of the fines collected from defendants whom he found guilty. Such an arrangement, we said, gave the judge a "direct, personal, substantial[, and] pecuniary interest" in reaching a particular outcome and thereby denied the defendant his right to an impartial arbiter. *Id.*, at 523, 47 S.Ct. 437. *Ward v. Monroeville*, 409 U.S. 57, 93 S.Ct. 80, 34 L. Ed. 2d 267 (1972), extended *Tumey's* reasoning, holding that due process was similarly violated where fines collected from guilty defendants constituted a large part of a village's finances, for which the judge, who also served as the village mayor, was responsible. Even though the mayor did not personally share in those fines, we concluded, he "perforce occupie[d] two practically and seriously inconsistent positions, one partisan and the other judicial." 409 U.S., at 60, 93 S.Ct. 80 (internal quotation marks omitted).

We applied the principle of *Tumey* and *Ward* most recently in *Aetna Life Ins. Co. v. Lavoie*, 475 U.S. 813, 106 S.Ct. 1580, 89 L. Ed. 2d 823 (1986). That decision invalidated a ruling of the Alabama Supreme Court written by a justice who had a personal interest in the resolution of a dispositive issue. The Alabama Supreme Court's ruling was issued while the justice was pursuing a separate lawsuit in an Alabama lower court, and its outcome "had the clear and immediate effect of enhancing both the legal status and the settlement value" of that separate suit. *Id.*, at 824, 106 S.Ct. 1580. As in *Ward* and *Tumey*, we held, the justice therefore had an interest in the outcome of the decision that unsuited him to participate in the judgment. 475 U.S., at 824, 106 S.Ct. 1580. It mattered not whether the justice

was actually influenced by this interest; "[t]he Due Process Clause," we observed, "may sometimes bar trial by judges who have no actual bias and who would do their very best to weigh the scales of justice equally between contending parties." *Id.*, at 825, 106 S.Ct. 1580 (internal quotation marks omitted).

These cases establish three propositions important to this dispute. First, a litigant is deprived of due process where the judge who hears his case has a "direct, personal, substantial, and pecuniary" interest in ruling against him. *Id.*, at 824, 106 S.Ct. 1580 (internal quotation marks and alteration omitted). Second, this interest need not be as direct as it was in *Tumey*, where the judge was essentially compensated for each conviction he obtained; the interest may stem, as in *Ward*, from the judge's knowledge that his success and tenure in office depend on certain outcomes. "[T]he test," we have said, "is whether the . . . situation is one 'which would offer a possible temptation to the average man as a judge [that] might lead him not to hold the balance nice, clear and true.'" *Ward*, 409 U.S., at 60, 93 S.Ct. 80 (quoting *Tumey*, 273 U.S., at 532, 47 S.Ct. 437). And third, due process does not require a showing that the judge is actually biased as a result of his self-interest. Rather, our cases have "always endeavored to prevent even the probability of unfairness." *In re Murchison*, 349 U.S., at 136, 75 S.Ct. 623. "[T]he requirement of due process of law in judicial procedure is not satisfied by the argument that men of the highest honor and the greatest self-sacrifice could carry it on without danger of injustice." *Tumey*, 273 U.S., at 532, 47 S.Ct. 437.[1]

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[1] To avoid the import of our due process decisions, the Court dissects the concept of judicial "impartiality," *ante*, at 2535-2537 [131a-136a], concluding that only one variant of that concept--lack of prejudice against a *party*—is secured by the Fourteenth Amendment, *ante*, at 2535-2536 [131a-132a]. Our Due Process Clause cases do not focus solely on bias against a particular party, but rather

The justification for the pledges or promises prohibition follows from these principles. When a judicial candidate promises to rule a certain way on an issue that may later reach the courts, the potential for due process violations is grave and manifest. If successful in her bid for office, the judicial candidate will become a judge, and in that capacity she will be under pressure to resist the pleas of litigants who advance positions contrary to her pledges on the campaign trail. If the judge fails to honor her campaign promises, she will not only face abandonment by supporters of her professed views; she will also "ris[k] being assailed as a dissembler," 247 F.3d, at 878, willing to say one thing to win an election and to do the opposite once in office.

A judge in this position therefore may be thought to have a "direct, personal, substantial, [and] pecuniary interest" in ruling against certain litigants, *Tumey*, 273 U.S., at 523, 47 S.Ct. 437, for she may be voted off the bench and thereby lose her salary and emoluments unless she honors the pledge that secured her election. See Shepard, Campaign Speech: Restraint and Liberty in Judicial Ethics, 9 Geo. J. Legal Ethics 1059, 1083-1092 (1996); see *id.*, at 1088 ("[A]

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inquire more broadly into whether the surrounding circumstances and incentives compromise the judge's ability faithfully to discharge her assigned duties. See *supra*, at 2556 [173a]. To be sure, due process violations may arise where a judge has been so personally "enmeshed in matters" concerning one party that he is biased against him. See *Johnson v. Mississippi*, 403 U.S. 212, 215, 91 S.Ct. 1778, 29 L. Ed. 2d 423 (1971) (*per curiam*) (judge had been "a defendant in one of petitioner's civil rights suits and a losing party at that"). They may also arise, however, not because of any predisposition toward a party, but rather because of the judge's personal interest in resolving an issue a certain way. See *Aetna Life Ins. Co. v. Lavoie*, 475 U.S. 813, 106 S.Ct. 1580, 89 L. Ed. 2d 823 (1986). Due process will not countenance the latter situation, even though the self-interested judge "will apply the law to [the losing party] in the same way he [would apply] it to any other party" advancing the same position, *ante*, at 2535 [131a].

campaign promise [may be characterized as] a bribe offered to voters, paid with rulings consistent with that promise, in return for continued employment as a judge."); see also The Federalist No. 79, p. 472 (C. Rossiter ed. 1961) ("In the general course of human nature, a power over a man's subsistence amounts to a power over his will." (emphasis deleted)).

Given this grave danger to litigants from judicial campaign promises, States are justified in barring expression of such commitments, for they typify the "situatio[n] . . . in which experience teaches that the probability of actual bias on the part of the judge . . . is too high to be constitutionally tolerable." *Withrow v. Larkin*, 421 U.S. 35, 47, 95 S.Ct. 1456, 43 L. Ed. 2d 712 (1975). By removing this source of "possible temptation" for a judge to rule on the basis of self-interest, *Tumey*, 273 U.S., at 532, 47 S.Ct. 437, the pledges or promises prohibition furthers the State's "compellin[g] interest in maintaining a judiciary fully capable of performing" its appointed task, *Gregory v. Ashcroft*, 501 U.S. 452, 472, 111 S.Ct. 2395, 115 L. Ed. 2d 410 (1991): "judging [each] particular controversy fairly on the basis of its own circumstances," *United States v. Morgan*, 313 U.S. 409, 421, 61 S.Ct. 999, 85 L. Ed. 1429 (1941). See O'Neil, 35 Ind. L. Rev., at 723 ("What is at stake here is no less than the promise of fairness, impartiality, and ultimately of due process for those whose lives and fortunes depend upon judges being selected by means that are not fully subject to the vagaries of American politics.").

In addition to protecting litigants' due process rights, the parties in this case further agree, the pledges or promises clause advances another compelling state interest: preserving the public's confidence in the integrity and impartiality of its judiciary. See Tr. of Oral Arg. 16 (petitioners' statement that pledges or promises properly fosters "public perception of the impartiality of the judiciary"). See *Cox v.*

Louisiana, 379 U.S. 559, 565, 85 S.Ct. 476, 13 L. Ed. 2d 487 (1965) ("A State may . . . properly protect the judicial process from being misjudged in the minds of the public."); *In re Murchison*, 349 U.S., at 136, 75 S.Ct. 623 ("[T]o perform its high function in the best way[,] 'justice must satisfy the appearance of justice.'" (quoting *Offutt v. United States*, 348 U.S. 11, 14, 75 S.Ct. 11, 99 L. Ed. 11 (1954))). Because courts control neither the purse nor the sword, their authority ultimately rests on public faith in those who don the robe. See *Mistretta v. United States*, 488 U.S. 361, 407, 109 S.Ct. 647, 102 L. Ed. 2d 714 (1989) ("The legitimacy of the Judicial Branch ultimately depends on its reputation for impartiality and nonpartisanship."). As the Minnesota Supreme Court has recognized, all legal systems—regardless of their method of judicial selection—"can function only so long as the public, having confidence in the integrity of its judges, accepts and abides by judicial decisions." *Complaint Concerning Winton*, 350 N.W.2d 337, 340 (1984).

Prohibiting a judicial candidate from pledging or promising certain results if elected directly promotes the State's interest in preserving public faith in the bench. When a candidate makes such a promise during a campaign, the public will no doubt perceive that she is doing so in the hope of garnering votes. And the public will in turn likely conclude that when the candidate decides an issue in accord with that promise, she does so at least in part to discharge her undertaking to the voters in the previous election and to prevent voter abandonment in the next. The perception of that unseemly *quid pro quo*—a judicial candidate's promises on issues in return for the electorate's votes at the polls—inevitably diminishes the public's faith in the ability of judges to administer the law without regard to personal

or political self-interest.[4] Then-Justice REHNQUIST's observations about the federal system apply with equal if not greater force in the context of Minnesota's elective judiciary: Regarding the appearance of judicial integrity,

> "[one must] distinguish quite sharply between a public statement made prior to nomination for the bench, on the one hand, and a public statement made by a nominee to the bench. For the latter to express any but the most general observation about the law would suggest that, in order to obtain favorable consideration of his nomination, he deliberately was announcing in advance, without benefit of judicial oath, briefs, or argument, how he would decide a particular question that might come before him as a judge." *Laird v. Tatum*, 409 U.S. 824, 836, n. 5, 93 S.Ct. 7, 34 L. Ed. 2d 50 (1972) (memorandum opinion).

B

The constitutionality of the pledges or promises clause is thus amply supported; the provision not only advances due process of law for litigants in Minnesota courts, it also reinforces the authority of the Minnesota judiciary by promoting public confidence in the State's judges. The An-

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[4] The author of the Court's opinion declined on precisely these grounds to tell the Senate whether he would overrule a particular case:

> "Let us assume that I have people arguing before me to do it or not to do it. I think it is quite a thing to be arguing to somebody who you know has made a representation in the course of his confirmation hearings, and that is, by way of condition to his being confirmed, that he will do this or do that. I think I would be in a very bad position to adjudicate the case without being accused of having a less than impartial view of the matter." 13 R. Mersky & J. Jacobstein, The Supreme Court of the United States: Hearings and Reports on Successful and Unsuccessful Nominations of Supreme Court Justices by the Senate Judiciary Committee, 1916-1986, p. 131 (1989) (hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee on the nomination of then-Judge Scalia).

nounce Clause, however, is equally vital to achieving these compelling ends, for without it, the pledges or promises provision would be feeble, an arid form, a matter of no real importance.

Uncoupled from the Announce Clause, the ban on pledges or promises is easily circumvented. By prefacing a campaign commitment with the caveat, "although I cannot promise anything," or by simply avoiding the language of promises or pledges altogether, a candidate could declare with impunity how she would decide specific issues. Semantic sanitizing of the candidate's commitment would not, however, diminish its pernicious effects on actual and perceived judicial impartiality. To use the Court's example, a candidate who campaigns by saying, "If elected, I will vote to uphold the legislature's power to prohibit same-sex marriages," *ante*, at 2537 [136a], will feel scarcely more pressure to honor that statement than the candidate who stands behind a podium and tells a throng of cheering supporters: "I think it is constitutional for the legislature to prohibit same-sex marriages," *ibid.* Made during a campaign, both statements contemplate a *quid pro quo* between candidate and voter. Both effectively "bind [the candidate] to maintain that position after election." *Ante*, at 2532 [126a]. And both convey the impression of a candidate prejudging an issue to win votes. Contrary to the Court's assertion, the "nonpromissory" statement averts none of the dangers posed by the "promissory" one. See *ante*, at 2537-2538 [136a-137a] (emphasis deleted).

By targeting statements that do not technically constitute pledges or promises but nevertheless "publicly mak[e] known how [the candidate] would decide" legal issues, 247 F.3d, at 881-882, the Announce Clause prevents this end run around the letter and spirit of its companion

provision.[5] No less than the pledges or promises clause itself, the Announce Clause is an indispensable part of Minnesota's effort to maintain the health of its judiciary, and is therefore constitutional for the same reasons.

* * *

This Court has recognized in the past, as Justice O'CONNOR does today, see *ante*, at 2542-2543 [146a-147a] (concurring opinion), a "fundamental tension between the ideal character of the judicial office and the real world of electoral politics," *Chisom*, 501 U.S., at 400, 111 S.Ct. 2354. We have no warrant to resolve that tension, however, by forcing States to choose one pole or the other. Judges are not politicians, and the First Amendment does not require that they be treated as politicians simply because they are chosen by popular vote. Nor does the First Amendment command States that wish to promote the integrity of their judges in fact and appearance to abandon systems of judi-

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[5] In the absence of the Announce Clause, other components of the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct designed to maintain the nonpartisan character of the State's judicial elections would similarly unravel. A candidate would have no need to "attend political gatherings" or "make speeches on behalf of a political organization," Minn. Code of Judical Conduct, Canon 5(A)(1)(c), (d) (2002), for she could simply state her views elsewhere, counting on her supporters to carry those views to the party faithful. And although candidates would remain barred from "seek [ing], accept[ing,] or us[ing] endorsements from a political organization," Canon 5(A)(1)(d), parties might well provide such endorsements unsolicited upon hearing candidates' views on specific issues. Cf. *ante*, at 2532 (Minnesota Republican Party sought to learn Wersal's views so party could support or oppose his candidacy). Those unsolicited endorsements, in turn, would render ineffective the prohibition against candidates "identify[ing] themselves as members of a political organization," Canon 5(A)(1)(a). "Indeed, it is not too much to say that the entire fabric of Minnesota's non[p]artisan elections hangs by the Announce clause thread." Brief for Minnesota State Bar Association as *Amicus Curiae* 20.

cial selection that the people, in the exercise of their sovereign prerogatives, have devised.

For more than three-quarters of a century, States like Minnesota have endeavored, through experiment tested by experience, to balance the constitutional interests in judicial integrity and free expression within the unique setting of an elected judiciary. P. McFadden, Electing Justice: The Law and Ethics of Judicial Election Campaigns 86 (1990); Brief for the Conference of Chief Justices as *Amicus Curiae* 5. The Announce Clause, borne of this long effort, "comes to this Court bearing a weighty title of respect," *Teamsters v. Hanke*, 339 U.S. 470, 475, 70 S.Ct. 773, 94 L. Ed. 995 (1950). I would uphold it as an essential component in Minnesota's accommodation of the complex and competing concerns in this sensitive area. Accordingly, I would affirm the judgment of the Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit.

APPENDIX E

UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, ET AL.
PETITIONERS,

V.

VERNA KELLY, CHAIRPERSON, MINNESOTA BOARD OF JUDICIAL STANADARDS, ET AL.

No. 01-521

Dec. 3, 2001

Case below, 247 F.3d 854.

Petition for writ of certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit granted limited to Question 1 presented by the petition.

APPENDIX F

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE EIGHTH CIRCUIT

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, ET AL.,
APPELLANTS,

v.

BARRY M. LAZARUS, ET AL.,
APPELLEES,

NOS. 99-4021, 99-4025, 99-4029

June 26, 2001

ORDER DENYING PETITION FOR REHEAERING AND FOR REHEARING EN BANC

The petitions for rehearing en banc are denied. Judges Bowman and Morris Sheppard Arnold would grant the petitions.

The petitions for rehearing by the panel are also denied. Judge Beam would grant the petitions.

Order entered at the Direction of the Court:
/s/ Michael E. Gans
Clerk, U.S. Court of Appeals, Eighth Circuit

APPENDIX G

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE EIGHTH CIRCUIT

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; INDIAN ASIAN AMERICAN REPUBLICANS OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; REPUBLICAN SENIORS, AN ASSOCIATION; YOUNG REPUBLICAN LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA, A MINNESOTA NONPROFIT CORPORATION; MINNESOTA COLLEGE REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION,

PLAINTIFFS—APPELLANTS,

GREGORY F. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFF,

CHERYL L. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; MARK E. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; CORWIN C. HULBERT, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFFS—APPELLANTS,

CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE, AN ASSOCIATION,

PLAINTIFF,

MINNESOTA AFRICAN AMERICAN REPUBLIC COUNCIL, AN ASSOCIATION,

PLAINTIFF—APPELLANT,

MUSLIM REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION; MICHAEL MAXIM, INDIVIDUALLY; KEVIN J. KOLOSKY, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFFS,

V.

VERNA KELLY, IN HER CAPACITY AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE MINNESOTA BOARD OF JUDICIAL STANDARDS, OR HER SUCCESSOR,

DEFENDANT

BARRY M. LAZARUS, IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE MINNESOTA BOARD OF JUDICIAL STANDARDS, OR HIS SUCCESSOR; EDWARD J. CLEARY, IN HIS CAPACITY AS

DIRECTOR OF THE MINNESOTA OFFICE OF LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, OR HIS SUCCESSOR; CHARLES E. LUNDBERG, IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIR OF THE MINNESOTA LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BOARD, OR HIS SUCCESSOR,

DEFENDANTS—APPELLEES,

MINNESOTA CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION, AMICUS ON BEHALF OF APPELLANT,

THE MINNESOTA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION; AMICUS ON BEHALF OF APPELLEE.

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; INDIAN ASIAN AMERICAN REPUBLICANS OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; REPUBLICAN SENIORS, AN ASSOCIATION; YOUNG REPUBLICAN LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA, A MINNESOTA NONPROFIT CORPORATION; MINNESOTA COLLEGE REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION; MINNESOTA AFRICAN AMERICAN REPUBLIC COUNCIL, AN ASSOCIATION; CHERYL L. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; MARK E. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; CORWIN C. HULBERT, INDIVIDUALLY; GREGORY F. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE, AN ASSOCIATION; MUSLIM REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION,

PLAINTIFFS,

MICHAEL MAXIM, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFF—APPELLANT,

KEVIN J. KOLOSKY, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFF,

V.

VERNA KELLY, IN HER CAPACITY AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE MINNESOTA BOARD OF JUDICIAL STANDARDS, OR HER SUCCESSOR;

DEFENDANT,

BARRY M. LAZARUS, IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE MINNESOTA BOARD OF JUDICIAL STANDARDS, OR HIS

SUCCESSOR; EDWARD J. CLEARY, IN HIS CAPACITY AS DIRECTOR OF THE MINNESOTA OFFICE OF LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, OR HIS SUCCESSOR; CHARLES E. LUNDBERG, IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIR OF THE MINNESOTA LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BOARD, OR HIS SUCCESSOR,

DEFENDANTS—APPELLEES,

THE MINNESOTA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION, AMICUS ON BEHALF OF APPELLEE.

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; INDIAN ASIAN AMERICAN REPUBLICANS OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; REPUBLICAN SENIORS, AN ASSOCIATION; YOUNG REPUBLICAN LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA, A MINNESOTA NONPROFIT CORPORATION; MINNESOTA COLLEGE REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION,

PLAINTIFFS,

GREGORY F. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFF—APPELLANT,

CHERYL L. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; MARK E. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; CORWIN C. HULBERT, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFFS,

CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE, AN ASSOCIATION,

PLAINTIFF—APPELLANT,

MINNESOTA AFRICAN AMERICAN REPUBLIC COUNCIL, AN ASSOCIATION; MUSLIM REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION; MICHAEL MAXIM, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFFS,

KEVIN J. KOLOSKY, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFF—APPELLANT,

V.

VERNA KELLY, IN HER CAPACITY AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE MINNESOTA BOARD OF JUDICIAL STANDARDS, OR HER SUCCESSOR;

DEFENDANT.

BARRY M. LAZARUS, IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE MINNESOTA BOARD OF JUDICIAL STANDARDS, OR HIS SUCCESSOR; EDWARD J. CLEARY, IN HIS CAPACITY AS DIRECTOR OF THE MINNESOTA OFFICE OF LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, OR HIS SUCCESSOR; CHARLES E. LUNDBERG, IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIR OF THE MINNESOTA LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BOARD, OR HIS SUCCESSOR,

DEFENDANTS—APPELLEES,

THE MINNESOTA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION, AMICUS ON BEHALF OF APPELLANTS.

NOS. 99-4021, 99-4025, 99-4029

Submitted: May 10, 2000
Filed: April 30, 2001

Before McMILLIAN, JOHN R. GIBSON, and BEAM, Circuit Judges.

JOHN R. GIBSON, Circuit Judge.

The issue before us in this appeal is whether Canon 5 of the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct, a rule promulgated by the Supreme Court of Minnesota to deal with political activity deemed inappropriate to judicial office, violates the First and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution. Canon 5 restricts candidates for judicial office from attending and speaking at partisan political gatherings; identifying their membership in a political party; seeking, accepting, or using a political party endorsement; announcing their views on disputed legal and political issues; personally soliciting campaign contributions; or authorizing or knowingly permitting others to do

these things on the candidates' behalf. The district court[1] held that Canon 5's provisions, except for the restriction on candidates announcing their views on disputed legal and political issues, were narrowly tailored to serve a compelling state interest in maintaining the independence and impartiality of Minnesota's judiciary, did not offend equal protection, and were not impermissibly vague. *Republican Party v. Kelly*, 63 F. Supp. 2d 967, 974-83 (D. Minn. 1999). As to the "announce" clause, the court concluded that a broad reading of the clause would raise constitutional difficulties. The court construed the clause narrowly to uphold its constitutionality, however, predicting that the Minnesota Supreme Court would do the same. *Id.* at 983-86. We affirm.

I.

The Minnesota Constitution provides that judges "shall be elected by the voters from the area which they are to serve," and that their term of office shall be six years. Minn. Const. art. 6, § 7. In 1912, the Minnesota General Assembly designated judicial elections as nonpartisan, meaning that party affiliation is not listed when candidates file for office, nor does it appear on the ballot. Act of June 19, 1912, ch. 2, 1912 Minn. Laws Spec. Sess. 4-6.

Ethical codes restricting the campaign conduct of judicial candidates have existed in Minnesota since at least 1950, when the Minnesota District Judges Association adopted by unanimous vote the ABA's Canons of Judicial Ethics (1924). In 1974, the Minnesota Supreme Court promulgated a code of judicial conduct that was based in large measure on the ABA's Model Code of Judicial Conduct (1972). Over the years, the Minnesota Supreme Court has revised its ethical rules, including those relating to a candidate's ability to attend and speak at political

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[1] The Honorable Michael J. Davis, United States District Judge for the District of Minnesota.

gatherings, to solicit campaign funds, and to discuss certain topics.

Gregory Wersal, a Minneapolis-area attorney and long-time member of the Republican Party of Minnesota, ran unsuccessfully for the office of Associate Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court in 1996 and 1998. The year Wersal launched his first campaign, the Minnesota Supreme Court revised its code of judicial conduct. The court renumbered and reorganized the canons and made several substantive changes, bringing the code largely in line with the 1990 version of the ABA's Model Code of Judicial Conduct.

Wersal interpreted one revision to lift a twenty-two-year ban on judicial candidates speaking to partisan political gatherings. From 1974 until 1996, Canon 7 of the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct barred candidates and judicial incumbents from speaking at partisan political gatherings, but allowed them to accept invitations to speak on their own behalf to other groups. Canon 7(A)(2) (1974) (a judicial candidate or incumbent "may accept invitations to attend and speak on his own behalf at other than partisan political gatherings"). It also prohibited judges from engaging in political activity except on behalf of measures to improve the law or the legal system. Canon 7(A)(4) (1974). In the 1996 revisions, the Minnesota Supreme Court reorganized and revised the subsections of Canon 7 and renumbered it as Canon 5. One subsection of the newly revised Canon 5 allowed candidates and judges to speak on their own behalf to gatherings generally, while another prohibited candidates and incumbents from attending political events. Canon (5)(A)(1)(a) & (d) (1996).

Consistent with his reading of the canon, Wersal, his wife Cheryl, and members of his campaign committee spoke at Republican Party gatherings as part of Wersal's 1996 bid for office. At these gatherings, they announced that Wersal was a member of the Republican Party and that he favored

strict construction of the Constitution. They distributed campaign literature criticizing several Minnesota Supreme Court decisions on issues such as crime, welfare, and abortion as being "marked by their disregard for the Legislature and lack of common sense." In addition, the campaign committee sought unsuccessfully to obtain an endorsement by the Republican Party.[2]

In May 1996, a delegate to a Republican district convention filed an ethical complaint against Wersal with the Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility. The Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility, under the direction of the Minnesota Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board (collectively, the Lawyers Board), investigates and prosecutes ethical violations of lawyer candidates for judicial office. The complainant questioned the propriety of Wersal's attendance at Republican gatherings, the campaign committee's solicitation of partisan support, and the campaign materials critical of Minnesota Supreme Court decisions. The Director of the Lawyers Board dismissed the complaint, concluding that no disciplinary action was warranted under Canon 5.

In the Director's written determination, she first noted that it was unclear whether the Minnesota Supreme Court

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[2] At least in recent times, it has not been the norm in Minnesota for judicial candidates to seek political party endorsements or for political parties to consider endorsing them. The parties submitted no evidence that other judicial candidate campaign committees sought or were considered for such endorsements. In a February 10, 1998 letter, Wersal wrote a newspaper editor that "the Republican Party had never endorsed a judicial candidate before," and a June 20, 1998 Minnesota newspaper article characterized the Party's deliberation over whether to endorse Wersal as "a historic break with tradition." Party endorsements may not have been uncommon early in the twentieth century. *See Moon v. Halverson*, 206 Minn. 331, 288 N.W. 579, 581-82 (1939) (Loring, J., concurring) (commenting on recent allegations of party treason directed at judges who issued decisions contrary to endorsing party's interests).

had intended to retain the ban on candidates speaking to political gatherings when it revised the code in 1996. Second, she pointed out that the 1996 version of Canon 5 restricted only candidates, and not their campaign committees, from soliciting publicly stated support. Finally, the Director expressed doubts about the applicability of the announce clause to Wersal's campaign statements. Citing several decisions from other jurisdictions in which similar language was either struck down or interpreted narrowly, she also questioned whether the clause was enforceable.

Ethical complaints are deemed confidential in Minnesota, but notification of the Director's initial determination whether a complaint should be dismissed summarily or investigated further is provided to the complainant and to the respondent lawyer. Sometime after Wersal received this notification, he withdrew his candidacy for the 1996 race, fearing that further ethical complaints would jeopardize his ability to practice law. In January of the following year, Wersal announced his candidacy for a supreme court seat opening up in 1998, and he and his campaign committee began campaigning as they had in the 1996 race, including the campaign committee's pursuing the Republican Party endorsement.

The Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards (the Judicial Board), the body charged with enforcing ethical codes against judges, petitioned the Minnesota Supreme Court in September 1997 to amend Canon 5, primarily to clarify the nonpartisan nature of judicial elections. The Judicial Board, which had become aware that Wersal's campaign committee was soliciting a political party endorsement, urged the court to add language that would limit the ability of candidates to identify themselves as members of a political organization and that would prevent campaign committees from seeking endorsements from political organizations. The Judicial Board also recommended that the court clarify that judicial candidates could not speak to poli-

tical gatherings. Following a hearing, the court adopted each of these recommendations. Order Amending Canon 5 of the Code of Judicial Conduct, No. C7-81-300 (Dec. 23, 1997). The changes took effect January 1, 1998.

In February 1998, Wersal sought an advisory opinion from the Lawyers Board. He asked whether the Board would prosecute him for ethical violations if he spoke at political party gatherings or sought a Republican Party endorsement. He also inquired whether the Board would enforce the provision of Canon 5 restricting candidates from announcing their views on disputed issues. The Director answered by stating that Wersal would be subject to discipline regarding the first two actions he proposed, but that the Board could not advise him on the latter question since Wersal had not provided the Board with information about any particular statements he wished to make that might have been a view on a disputed legal or political issue. The Director also stated that the Board continued to have "significant doubts as to whether or not [the announce clause] would survive a facial challenge to its constitutionality" and that it would not enforce the provision unless the speech at issue violated other portions of the judicial ethics code.

A few days after he received this advisory opinion, Wersal filed this complaint under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 (1994), seeking declaratory and injunctive relief from the provisions of Canon 5. Joined as plaintiffs were the Republican Party of Minnesota (the Party), its affiliated organizations,[3] and several other individuals and organizations interested in Wer-

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[3] These affiliated organizations included the Indian Asian American Republicans, the Republican Seniors, the Young Republicans League of Minnesota, and the Minnesota College Republicans. The Minnesota African American Republican Council and the Muslim Republicans, also affiliated organizations, were later added as plaintiffs.

sal's candidacy.[4] The complaint alleged that Canon 5 violated the free speech and association guarantees of the First Amendment and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Wersal and the other plaintiffs moved for a temporary restraining order and/or preliminary injunction to enjoin the Lawyers Board and Judicial Board from enforcing Canon 5 so that Wersal would be free to participate in Republican precinct caucuses scheduled for early March 1998. The district court denied the motion,[5] and we subsequently affirmed. *Republican Party v. Kelly*, 996 F. Supp. 875 (D. Minn. 1998), *aff'd*, No. 98-1625, 1998 WL 764782 (8th Cir. Nov. 2, 1998).

While appeal of the district court's order was pending, Wersal continued his campaign, but was forced to cancel the numerous speaking engagements he had scheduled at the precinct caucuses and other Republican events. He wrote at least five persons who he knew intended to advocate his candidacy at these events and asked them not to do so because of his concern that someone might infer that he had "knowingly permitted" them to do so in violation of Canon

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[4] Other plaintiffs included Wersal's campaign committee, and Party members Cheryl Wersal, Mark Wersal, and Corwin Hulbert. Michael Maxim, another member of the Minnesota Republican Party, and Kevin Kolosky, also a candidate for judicial office in 1996 and 1998, later joined as plaintiffs. Because the Party, its affiliated organizations, and its members Cheryl Wersal, Mark Wersal, and Corwin Hulbert have filed a single brief, we refer only to the Party when addressing their arguments. Likewise, we refer only to Gregory Wersal when addressing his contentions, those of Kolosky, and the campaign committee, who also have submitted a single brief.

[5] The district court found that the plaintiffs established a likelihood of success on their claim that the announce clause was unconstitutional, but concluded that the State's interest in maintaining a nonpartisan judicial election weighed against enjoining enforcement of all of Canon 5. *Republican Party v. Kelly*, 996 F. Supp. 875, 879-80 (D. Minn. 1998).

5. On advice of counsel, he declined to answer questions posed by members of the press and public when he thought answering might impermissibly disclose his views on disputed issues. His wife Cheryl and his brother Mark, a member of his campaign committee, refrained from taking part in certain campaign activities on Wersal's behalf for fear that their action would subject Wersal to discipline.

At the state Republican convention held in June, Michael Maxim, a delegate who was later joined as a plaintiff in this case, moved that the Party endorse Wersal. After considerable debate, the motion failed by a vote of 344 to 390. No other candidates for judicial office were nominated for endorsement. Because of the Republican Party's policy of not supporting candidates it had not formally endorsed, the Party did nothing to further Wersal's bid for office. His campaign ended when he came in third in the primary.

The parties filed cross motions for summary judgment. The district court found in favor of defendants on all claims. *Republican Party v. Kelly*, 63 F. Supp. 2d 967 (D. Minn. 1999). The court concluded that the State had compelling interests in maintaining the actual and apparent integrity and independence of the judiciary and that the restrictions on candidates' political activity and fund solicitation were narrowly tailored to serve those interests. *Id.* at 974-80. It also upheld the provisions against vagueness and equal protection challenges. *Id.* at 980-82. In its analysis of the announce clause, the court determined that the critical issue was whether the provision was narrowly tailored to serve the State's interest in maintaining the integrity and independence of the judiciary. The district court construed the clause to reach only the discussion of issues likely to come before the court, having considered that the Judicial Board had argued for a narrow interpretation of the clause and that the Minnesota Supreme Court, when possible, construes laws to prohibit their application to constitutionally protected expression. *Id.* at 985-86. The court then con-

cluded that the provision did not offend the First Amendment. *Id.* at 986.

Wersal and those joined with him appeal,[6] challenging the determinations made by the district court.

II.

We review the district court's grant of summary judgment de novo, applying the same standard the district court applied to the motion. *Essco Geometric v. Harvard Indus.*, 46 F.3d 718, 729 (8th Cir. 1995). We will affirm if we conclude there are no genuine issues of material fact and the Lawyers and Judicial Boards are entitled to judgment as a matter of law. Fed. R. Civ. P. 56(c); *Celotex Corp. v.*

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[6] For the first time on appeal, the Lawyers and Judicial Boards contend that the plaintiffs who are not candidates for judicial office and cannot be sanctioned by the Boards lack standing to challenge Canon 5. Citing *Laird v. Tatum*, 408 U.S. 1, 92 S. Ct. 2318, 33 L. Ed. 2d 154 (1972), the Boards argue that the plaintiffs' voluntary decisions not to advocate Wersal's candidacy do not constitute legally cognizable injuries. However, the plaintiffs have alleged more than the subjective "chilling" of their free speech rights held insufficient by the Supreme Court in *Tatum*, 408 U.S. at 13-14, 92 S. Ct. 2318. Wersal and the other plaintiffs have stated they were unable to associate with each other at political party gatherings and alleged they would have done so absent the ethical restrictions. Deprivation of the right to associate with others politically is a cognizable "injury in fact." *See Lerman v. Board of Elections*, 232 F.3d 135, 143 (2d Cir. 2000), *petition for cert. filed* (U.S. Feb. 28, 2001) (No. 00-1360); *Krislov v. Rednour*, 226 F.3d 851, 858 (7th Cir. 2000), *cert. denied*, [531 U.S. 1147], 121 S. Ct. 1085, 148 L. Ed. 2d 960 (2001) (No. 00-923). Because the plaintiffs' associational injuries are fairly traceable to Canon 5 and the injunctive relief they request will redress them, the plaintiffs have standing to assert their claims. *See Lujan v. Defenders of Wildlife*, 504 U.S. 555, 560-61, 112 S. Ct. 2130, 119 L. Ed. 2d 351 (1992) (Article III standing requires plaintiffs allege "injury in fact" fairly traceable to defendant's conduct likely to be redressed by favorable court decision); *National Solid Waste Management Ass'n v. Williams*, 146 F.3d 595, 598 (8th Cir. 1998).

Catrett, 477 U.S. 317, 322-23, 106 S. Ct. 2548, 91 L. Ed. 2d 265 (1986).

The plaintiffs contend that Canon 5 contravenes their First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and of association, made applicable to the States by the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. *Tashjian v. Republican Party*, 479 U.S. 208, 214, 107 S. Ct. 544, 93 L. Ed. 2d 514 (1986).

Freedom of speech reaches its high-water mark in the context of political expression. Debate about the qualification of candidates for public office is at the core of our First Amendment freedoms, *Eu v. San Francisco County Democratic Cent. Comm.*, 489 U.S. 214, 222-23, 109 S. Ct. 1013, 103 L. Ed. 2d 271 (1989), valuable not only as a personal liberty, but also because of the role it plays in the proper functioning of our entire democratic form of government. *Burson v. Freeman*, 504 U.S. 191, 196, 112 S. Ct. 1846, 119 L. Ed. 2d 5 (1992); *Brown v. Hartlage*, 456 U.S. 45, 52-53, 102 S. Ct. 1523, 71 L. Ed. 2d 732 (1982); *Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1, 14-15, 96 S. Ct. 612, 46 L. Ed. 2d 659 (1976) (per curiam). The closely related right of association is also particularly acute in the context of elections. *Eu*, 489 U.S. at 224-25, 109 S. Ct. 1013 (ban on endorsement in primary election acts at "crucial juncture" to prevent parties from promoting candidates who can translate shared ideas into action); *Buckley*, 424 U.S. at 15, 96 S. Ct. 612.

But even among restrictions that touch upon the core First Amendment rights to political speech and association, some restrictions are more burdensome than others, depending on the kind of activity that is restrained and on the nature of the restraint. *See Timmons v. Twin Cities Area New Party*, 520 U.S. 351, 358, 117 S. Ct. 1364, 137 L. Ed. 2d 589 (1997) (standard of review depends on character and magnitude of burden on associational rights). In *Buckley v. Valeo*, both campaign contribution limits and ex-

penditure limits affected core First Amendment expression and association interests, 424 U.S. at 14, 96 S. Ct. 612, yet the contribution limits placed a lesser burden on those interests than the expenditure limits did, *id.* at 19-23, 96 S. Ct. 612. Consequently, contribution limits have been reviewed under a less demanding standard. *Nixon v. Shrink Mo. Gov't PAC*, 528 U.S. 377, 120 S. Ct. 897, 903- 04, 145 L. Ed. 2d 886 (2000).

In this case, the restriction applies to conduct of candidates for judicial office.[7] There are important differences between judicial office, on the one hand, and legislative or executive office, on the other, that affect the nature of the candidate's interest in certain kinds of policy debate.

> The functioning of the judicial system differs markedly from those of the executive and legislative. In those areas, the public has the right to know the details of the programs that candidates propose to enact into law and administer. Pledges to follow certain paths are not only expected, but are desirable so that voters may make a choice between proposed agendas that affect the public. By contrast, the judicial system is based on the concept of individualized decisions on challenged conduct and interpretations of law enacted by the other branches of government.

Stretton v. Disciplinary Bd., 944 F.2d 137, 142 (3d Cir. 1991). *Accord Buckley v. Illinois Judicial Inquiry Bd.*, 997 F.2d 224, 228 (7th Cir. 1993) ("Judges remain different from legislators and executive officials ... in ways that bear on the strength of the state's interest in restricting their freedom of speech."); *In re Chmura*, 461 Mich. 517, 608 N.W.2d 31, 39-40 ("[T]he differences between judges and other government officials bear on the strength of the state's interest in restricting political speech."), *cert. de-*

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[7] We discuss the claim that Canon 5 also reaches the conduct of persons who are not judicial candidates *infra* at 873-75 [216a-220a].

nied, [531 U.S. 828], 121 S. Ct. 77, 148 L. Ed. 2d 40 (2000). Whereas affiliation with a partisan program is thus at the heart of executive and legislative campaigns, a State may conclude that it has no role in judicial campaigns because of the neutral, decision-making nature of the judicial function. "Because the judicial office is different in key respects from other offices, the state may regulate its judges with the differences in mind .... [The judicial candidate] cannot, consistent with the proper exercise of his judicial powers, bind himself to decide particular cases in order to achieve a given programmatic result." *Morial v. Judiciary Comm'n*, 565 F.2d 295, 305 (5th Cir. 1977). The judicial candidate simply does not have a First Amendment right to promise to abuse his office. *See Brown*, 456 U.S. at 54-56, 102 S. Ct. 1523 (some kinds of campaign promises "may be declared illegal without constitutional difficulty"); *In re Kaiser*, 111 Wash. 2d 275, 759 P.2d 392, 400 (1988) (holding statements of party affiliation do not refer to subject relevant to judicial qualification and therefore are not protected by First Amendment). Recognizing that the judiciary has a different job to do, Minnesota has provided that its judicial offices are nonpartisan. Minn. Stat. § 204B.06, subd. 6 (1998); *Peterson v. Stafford*, 490 N.W.2d 418, 420 (Minn. 1992). Thus, restrictions on Minnesota judicial candidates' speech are entirely different from limitations on the speech of candidates for partisan office, such as those in *Eu*, 489 U.S. at 217, 109 S. Ct. 1013 (striking statute making it misdemeanor for primary candidates to claim endorsement by party).

Another important aspect of the restraint in this case is that it does not discriminate in favor of one viewpoint or other. Minnesota's restraint of judicial candidates' First Amendment rights is a straightforward restriction of expression, rather than being incidental to some other type of regulation, such as a content-neutral time, place, or manner restriction, and in one sense, it is not content-neutral because it restricts speech on the basis of subject-matter. In

Burson v. Freeman, 504 U.S. 191, 112 S. Ct. 1846, 119 L. Ed. 2d 5 (1992), the Supreme Court considered a state law establishing a 100-foot "campaign-free" zone around polling places. Justice Blackmun rejected the assertion that the law was content-neutral: "Whether individuals may exercise their free speech rights near polling places depends entirely on whether their speech is related to a political campaign." *Id.* at 197, 112 S. Ct. 1846. Similarly, in this case, the bans on accepting political party endorsements, attending political party gatherings, identifying oneself as a party member, announcing views on disputed legal and political issues, and soliciting funds depend entirely on the subject matter of the speech. *See Hill v. Colorado*, 530 U.S. 703, 120 S. Ct. 2480, 2500, 147 L. Ed. 2d 597 (2000) (Souter, J., concurring) (government held to very exacting and rarely satisfied standard when it disfavors discussion of particular *subjects* or articulation of particular viewpoints).

However, the restriction in this case avoids discriminating against a particular viewpoint, which is the most serious threat to First Amendment rights. *See R.A.V. v. City of St. Paul*, 505 U.S. 377, 387-90, 112 S. Ct. 2538, 120 L. Ed. 2d 305 (1992) (treating "content discrimination" not as an evil in itself, but as evidence that "official suppression of ideas is afoot"). In *United States Civil Service Commission v. National Association of Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. 548, 93 S. Ct. 2880, 37 L. Ed. 2d 796 (1973), the Supreme Court entertained a challenge to the Hatch Act, which prohibited federal employees from taking an active part in political management or political campaigns. The Court prefaced its analysis with the observation that the challenged restrictions did not discriminate on the basis of viewpoint:

> The restrictions so far imposed on federal employees are not aimed at particular parties, groups, or points of view, but apply equally to all partisan activities of the type described. They discriminate against no ra-

> cial, ethnic, or religious minorities. Nor do they seek to control political opinions or beliefs, or to interfere with or influence anyone's vote at the polls.

Id. at 564, 93 S. Ct. 2880. *Accord Morial*, 565 F.2d at 301-02 (requirement that sitting judge resign before running for a non-judicial office did not penalize belief in any particular idea and therefore did not touch core First Amendment values). Thus, although Canon 5 does burden First Amendment rights, the burden is less onerous than it might otherwise be because Canon 5 does not discriminate on the basis of viewpoint and because it governs only judicial elections.

Because the restrictions on the employees' rights in *Letter Carriers* were similar to those of Canon 5, the defendants suggest we look to *Letter Carriers* and cases following it, which judged restrictions on speech of government employees under a balancing test less rigorous than strict First Amendment scrutiny. *See Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. at 564, 93 S. Ct. 2880. Wersal argues that we cannot apply the *Letter Carriers* balancing test to a restriction on his speech because he is not a government employee. But even though he is not presently a government employee, Canon 5 applies to him only insofar as he seeks to become one. The State can reasonably conclude that Wersal's actions as a candidate could affect his actions as a judge if he is elected, *see Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. at 26-27, 96 S. Ct. 612 (discussing danger of corruption from contributions to "current and potential office holders"), and so the reasoning of the balancing test cases fairly applies to him. However, the restrictions in this case are different from the Hatch Act provisions challenged in *Letter Carriers* because, while the Hatch Act restrained political activity of government employees, Canon 5 restrains the activity of candidates engaged in an election contest. The burden on the plaintiff in either case may be comparable, but the public's interest in free speech is greater where the person subject to restrictions is a candidate for public office, about whom the public

is obliged to inform itself. Therefore, we will invoke strict scrutiny and examine the restrictions at issue to determine whether they are narrowly tailored to serve a compelling state interest.[8] *See Stretton*, 944 F.2d at 141-42; *see generally California Democratic Party v. Jones*, 530 U.S. 567, 120 S. Ct. 2402, 2412, 147 L. Ed. 2d 502 (2000); *Burson*, 504 U.S. at 198, 112 S. Ct. 1846; *Brown*, 456 U.S. at 53-54, 102 S. Ct. 1523.

III.

The governmental interests put forth to justify Canon 5 are undeniably compelling. The Boards contend that the restrictions are necessary to guarantee the independence of the Minnesota judiciary, which in turn is crucial to preserve the justice of its courts of law and its citizens' faith in those courts. There is simply no question but that a judge's ability to apply the law neutrally is a compelling governmental interest of the highest order.

> Judges should decide cases in accordance with law rather than with any express or implied commitments that they may have made to their campaign supporters or to others .... Justice under law is as fundamental a part of the Western political tradition as democratic self-government and is historically more deeply rooted, having been essentially uncontested within the mainstream of the tradition since at least Cicero's time ....

Buckley v. Illinois Judicial Inquiry Bd., 997 F.2d 224, 227 (7th Cir. 1993). *Accord Stretton v. Disciplinary Bd.*, 944 F.2d 137, 142 (3d Cir. 1991) ("There can be no question ... that a state has a compelling interest in the integrity of its

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[8] The effects of Canon 5 on speech and associational rights, respectively, are so closely intertwined that, having decided to apply strict scrutiny because of the effects on speech, we need not consider whether the effects on associational rights alone would have called for a less rigorous standard.

judiciary .... If judicial candidates during a campaign prejudge cases that later come before them, the concept of impartial justice becomes a mockery."); *Morial v. Judiciary Comm'n*, 565 F.2d 295, 302 (5th Cir. 1977) ("Ours is an era in which members of the judiciary often are called upon to adjudicate cases squarely presenting hotly contested social or political issues. The state's interest in ensuring that judges be and appear to be neither antagonistic nor beholden to any interest, party, or person is entitled to the greatest respect.").

The plaintiffs contend that Minnesota has no interest in the independence of its judiciary because it has chosen to make its judges stand for election. Wersal says: "Contrary to popular understanding—even among lawyers—Minnesota does not have an 'independent' judiciary. Minnesota has an elected judiciary that its founding citizens specifically adopted in the Minnesota Constitution to insure its judiciary was not 'independent' from the voters." Wersal argues that when the citizens at the Democratic[9] Minnesota constitutional convention in 1857 debated whether the judiciary should be appointed or elected, they considered the then-recent *Dred Scott*[10] decision. They decided to choose judges by election and to give them finite terms, rather than life tenure, in order to retain the ability to oust unsatisfactory judges.

The Minnesota Supreme Court has considered the broad history of Minnesota judicial elections and has concluded that the State has historically pursued the ideal of an inde-

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[9] In Minnesota there were two constitutional conventions, one Democratic and one Republican. The two drafts resulting from those conventions were consolidated and then submitted for ratification. *Peterson v. Stafford*, 490 N.W.2d 418, 420 n. 10 (Minn. 1992).

[10] *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 60 U.S. (19 How.) 393, 15 L. Ed. 691 (1856).

pendent judiciary. In *Peterson v. Stafford*, 490 N.W.2d 418 (Minn. 1992), the Minnesota Supreme Court considered an equal protection challenge to Minn. Stat. § 204B.36, subds. 4 and 5 (1990), which provided that an incumbent judge should be designated as such on the ballot. In explaining the reason for the designation, the court identified the underpinnings of the Minnesota selection process as the search for an independent judiciary:

> The methods by which the federal system and other states initially select and then elect or retain judges are varied, yet the explicit or implicit goal of the constitutional provisions and enabling legislation is the same: to create and maintain an independent judiciary as free from political, economic and social pressure as possible so judges can decide cases without those influences[11] .... While the framers of our state constitution have developed a system of selection and election quite different from that federal scheme, they too designed a plan to recognize the uniqueness and independence of the state judiciary.

Id. at 420. *Peterson* traced the history of the Minnesota judicial selection process beginning with the adoption of the Minnesota Constitution in 1857, which provided that judges of the Supreme Court should be elected for seven-year terms, Minn. Const. art. 6, § 3 (1857), so that judicial elections did not coincide with elections for other offices. 490 N.W.2d at 420. Moreover, the 1857 Constitution provided that judges must be "learned in the law." Minn. Const. art. 6, § 5 (1857). "Implicit in this requirement is recognition that those elected as judges will be subject to the restrictive canons of conduct governing the profession of law." 490 N.W.2d at 422. The term length was reduced to six years in

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[11] The Minnesota Supreme Court has thus with great precision and specificity answered the dissent's rhetorical question, "Independent from what?" *Infra* at 886.

1883, which made more apparent the "difficulties associated with partisan judicial elections." *Id.* at 420. In 1912, the legislature enacted nonpartisan ballot legislation, Act of June 19, 1912, ch. 2, 1912 Minn. Laws, Spec. Sess. 4-6, which made the State's judicial offices nonpartisan. *See id.* at § 182. The court characterized this reform as an attempt to ensure the "judicial impartiality required to decide cases free from political maneuvering." 490 N.W.2d at 422.

Further, the Minnesota Constitution provided that whenever there was a judicial vacancy, the governor should appoint the successor, who would serve until his successor was elected.[12] Minn. Const. art. 6, § 10 (1857). In 1972, at the time when the State was studying the possible advantages of a merit selection plan, the time frame for this successor election was extended from the next general election occurring more than thirty days after the vacancy to the next general election occurring more than one year following the vacancy, in order to allow the electorate enough time to assess the new judge's competence. Minn. Const. art. 6, § 8 (amended 1972); *see Peterson*, 490 N.W.2d at 422-23.

In the context of this history, *Peterson* held that the ballot designation of the incumbent was rational:

> It seems clear that Minnesota has adopted its own middle-of-the-road approach to judicial selection. The open election process has been retained, but with a quasi-retention feature which simply informs the voter who the incumbent candidate is and who the challenger is. This arrangement acts as a check on the gubernatorial appointment process by keeping the

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[12] Since 1991 a judicial selection commission, which is composed of members appointed by the governor and by the justices of the supreme court, evaluates the merits of applicants for mid-term vacancies and recommends to the governor three to five nominees for each open position. Minn. Stat. §§ 480B.01, subds. 2, 8-11 (1998).

> ultimate choice with the voters while, at the same time, recognizing the unique independent nature of the judicial function.

490 N.W.2d at 425. Thus, the Minnesota Supreme Court has considered in depth the history and structure of Minnesota judicial elections procedures and has concluded that they are designed in large part to protect the independence of the State's judiciary.[13]

Other courts considering the same question have held that the decision to elect judges cannot be regarded as abandonment of a State's interest in an independent judiciary. *See Buckley*, 997 F.2d at 227 ("Judges remain different from legislators and executive officials, even when all are elected . . . ."); *Stretton*, 944 F.2d at 142 ("The fact that a state chooses to select its judges by popular election . . .

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[13] The dissent concludes that *Peterson*'s use of the phrase "independent 'as possible,'" *infra* at 891 [249a], must be viewed, not in light of *Peterson*'s detailed historical review, but rather in light of the dissent's independent review of Minnesota history. *See infra* at 886-90 [240a-249a]. The deference we must give to state court opinions on matters of state law does not allow us to supplant *Peterson*'s considered views in favor of our own de novo interpretation, nor may the dissent. The dissent also states that Canon 5 "subverts" Minnesota's policy, *infra* at 890 [224a], and seemingly presumes that Canon 5 is not part of state law because it emanates from the state supreme court, rather than from the state legislature. No one, including the dissent, has questioned the authority of the Minnesota Supreme Court to promulgate ethical rules for incumbent judges and judicial candidates. The same federalism principles which require us to defer to state courts' interpretations of state law and to recognize that state laws embody the will of a State also dictate that we recognize Canon 5 as a regulation that expresses Minnesota's will as a sovereign entity. *See Bush v. Gore*, 531 U.S. 98, 121 S. Ct. 525, 534, 148 L. Ed. 2d 388 (2000) (Rehnquist, C.J., concurring) ("in ordinary cases, the distribution of powers among the branches of a State's government raises no questions of federal constitutional law, subject to the requirement that the government be republican in character").

does not signify the abandonment of the ideal of an impartial judiciary carrying out its duties fairly and thoroughly."); *In re Chmura*, 461 Mich. 517, 608 N.W.2d 31, 39-40 ("By providing for the election of judges, the people of Michigan have not transformed judges into legislators or executives . . . ."), *cert. denied*, [531 U.S. 828], 121 S. Ct. 77, 148 L. Ed. 2d 40 (2000).

The governmental interest in an independent and impartial judiciary is matched by its equally important interest in preserving public confidence in that independence and impartiality. *See Cox v. Louisiana*, 379 U.S. 559, 565, 85 S. Ct. 476, 13 L. Ed. 2d 487 (1965) ("A State may also properly protect the judicial process from being misjudged in the minds of the public."); *Suster v. Marshall*, 149 F.3d 523, 532 (6th Cir. 1998) (State's interest in preventing judicial corruption or appearance of corruption compelling); *cf. Reeder v. Kansas City Bd. of Police Comm'rs*, 733 F.2d 543, 547 (8th Cir. 1984) ("It is proper for a state to insist that the police be, and appear to be, above reproach, like Caesar's wife."). *Letter Carriers* stressed that the appearance of corruption resulting from partisan activities of government employees could affect the entire government: "[I]t is not only important that the Government and its employees in fact avoid practicing political justice, but it is also critical that they appear to the public to be avoiding it, if confidence in the system of representative Government is not to be eroded to a disastrous extent." 413 U.S. at 565, 93 S. Ct. 2880.

Finally, a State has an interest in protecting its judges from pressure to participate in partisan activities, if it reasonably concludes that this protection is necessary to retain a high caliber of judges. "There could hardly be a higher governmental interest than a State's interest in the quality of its judiciary." *Landmark Communications, Inc. v. Virginia*, 435 U.S. 829, 848, 98 S. Ct. 1535, 56 L. Ed. 2d 1 (1978) (Stewart, J., concurring in judgment). *Letter Carriers*

applied an analogous principle when it justified the Hatch Act partly on the ground that it meant to protect government employees from political pressure from their superiors. 413 U.S. at 566-67, 93 S. Ct. 2880.

We therefore conclude that the Lawyers and Judicial Boards have shown compelling governmental interests[14] to justify Canon 5, and we turn to the necessity and narrow tailoring of the various restrictions found within it.

IV.

We first address Wersal's challenge to the three provisions of Canon 5(A) that prohibit him from attending political party gatherings; from seeking, accepting, or using endorsements from a party; and from identifying himself as a member of the party, except as necessary to vote. Minn. Code of Jud. Conduct Canon 5(A)(1)(a) & (d) (1998).[15]

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[14] In arguing that the state interests we have identified are not compelling, the dissent relies on *Landmark Communications, Inc. v. Virginia*, 435 U.S. 829, 98 S. Ct. 1535, 56 L. Ed. 2d 1 (1978), in which the State sought to govern not the conduct of judges, but of the press in reporting on judicial disciplinary proceedings. The dissent's discussion of *Landmark Communications* suggests that the compelling interest we rely on is protection of judges from criticism. *Infra* at 897 [261a]. We rely on the State's interest in its judges' integrity and independence, which requires keeping judges from doing (or appearing to do) things that compromise their neutrality, rather than keeping others from talking or writing about them. Minnesota seeks not to "shield[ ] judges from published criticism," *infra* at 898 [263a] (quoting *Bridges v. California*, 314 U.S. 252, 270-71, 62 S. Ct. 190, 86 L. Ed. 192 (1941)), but to prevent them from deserving such criticism. Moreover, the Supreme Court in *Landmark Communications* did not reject the legitimacy of the State's proffered interests in the reputation of its judiciary and the integrity of its disciplinary proceedings, but held that the State had not shown that these interests would be "seriously undermined" unless the State could use criminal sanctions against the defendant newspaper. *Id.* at 841, 845, 98 S. Ct. 1535.

[15] Canons 5(A)(1)(a) and (d) provide:

A.

We must determine whether these restraints protect Minnesota's interests in the integrity and quality of its judiciary. *United States v. Playboy Entertainment Group, Inc.*, 529 U.S. 803, 120 S. Ct. 1878, 1891, 146 L. Ed. 2d 865 (2000). The burden of proof rests with the State. *Id.* at 1888.

A threshold question is what sort of evidence the Boards must provide substantiating the threat to the governmental interest. In *Nixon v. Shrink Missouri Government PAC*, 528 U.S. 377, 120 S. Ct. 897, 145 L. Ed. 2d 886 (2000), the Supreme Court declined to answer this question definitively, *id.* at 907, but gave this guidance: "The quantum of empirical evidence needed to satisfy heightened judicial scrutiny of legislative judgments will vary up or down with the novelty and plausibility of the justification raised." *Id.* at 906. The asserted danger to the governmental interest in that case, danger of corruption attendant on large campaign contributions, was neither novel nor implausible, so that the State's burden was amply satisfied by its production of a state senator's affidavit and newspaper articles showing cases of apparent corruption. *Id.* at 907-08. The Court also assigned some evidentiary value to the passage of a campaign contribution limitation by a large margin at a referen-

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Each justice of the supreme court and each court of appeals and district court judge is deemed to hold a separate nonpartisan office. MS 204B.06 Subd. 6.

(1) Except as authorized in Section 5B(1), a judge or a candidate for election to judicial office shall not:

(a) act as a leader or hold any office in a political organization; identify themselves as members of a political organization, except as necessary to vote in an election.

. . . .

(d) attend political gatherings; or seek, accept or use endorsements from a political organization . . . .

dum, which demonstrated public concern about corruption.[16] *Id.* at 908. The Court quoted *City of Renton v. Playtime Theatres, Inc.*, 475 U.S. 41, 51-52, 106 S. Ct. 925, 89 L. Ed. 2d 29 (1986), in which the city's evidence was said to be adequate, "so long as whatever evidence the city relies upon is reasonably believed to be relevant to the problem that the city addresses." *Id.* at 907 n. 6. *Shrink Missouri* also noted the lack of evidence tending to disprove the State's theory. *Id.* at 908.

The idea that judicial integrity is threatened by judges deploying political organizations in connection with campaigns for judicial office is neither novel nor implausible. In *Letter Carriers*, the Supreme Court recognized that partisanship of governmental officials created a risk of corruption that justified the restraint of those officials' partisan activities. Although the Hatch Act applied to employees of the executive branch, the Court's reasoning could as well have been written about judges and in fact applies with even greater urgency to them:

> It seems fundamental in the first place that employees in the Executive Branch of the government, or those working for any of its agencies, should administer the law in accordance with the will of Congress, rather than in accordance with their own or the will of a political party. They are expected to enforce the law and execute the programs of the Government without bias or favoritism for or against any political party or group or the members thereof. A major thesis of the Hatch Act is that to serve this great end of Government—the impartial execution of the laws—it is essential that federal employees, for example, not take

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[16] We held the voter initiative imposing contribution limits invalid under the First Amendment in *Carver v. Nixon*, 72 F.3d 633, 645 (8th Cir. 1995); consequently, its restrictions were not in force when *Shrink Missouri* was decided.

> formal positions in political parties, not undertake to play substantial roles in partisan political campaigns, and not run for office on partisan political tickets. Forbidding activities like these will reduce the hazards to fair and effective government.

United States Civil Serv. Comm'n v. National Ass'n of Letter Carriers, 413 U.S. 548, 563-64, 93 S. Ct. 2880, 37 L. Ed. 2d 796 (1973). *Accord LaMontagne v. St. Louis Dev. Corp.*, 172 F.3d 555, 557 (8th Cir. 1999) (city employees), *cert. denied*, 528 U.S. 873, 120 S. Ct. 176, 145 L. Ed. 2d 148 (1999); *Reeder v. Kansas City Bd. of Police Comm'rs*, 733 F.2d 543, 547 (8th Cir. 1984) (police officers); *Otten v. Schicker*, 655 F.2d 142, 144 (8th Cir. 1981) (same).

The restriction here was adopted by the Minnesota Supreme Court, which has consistently over time perceived partisanship as posing a particular threat to judicial integrity. Canon 7(A) of Minnesota's 1974 Code of Judicial Conduct also restricted a judicial candidate's political activities broadly, specifically permitting a candidate for elective judicial office to appear at "*other than partisan political gatherings* during the year in which he is a candidate." Minn. Code of Judicial Conduct Canon 7(A)(2) (1974) (emphasis added). The comments of the advisory committee accompanying the 1995 Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct state: "Deference to the judgments and rulings of courts depends upon public confidence in the integrity and independence of judges. The integrity and independence of judges depends in turn upon their acting without fear or favor." Canon 1(A) cmt. In proposing to the court the 1997 amendments to clarify the prohibitions on partisan conduct the Judicial Board stated: "The Judicial Standards Board members believe the proposed language changes will make it clear that judicial elections are to be nonpartisan. Minnesota has a long tradition of nonpartisan judicial elections, and these changes will assure a strong, independent judiciary."

Long before the present canons were adopted, justices of the Minnesota Supreme Court had also expressed the idea that merely avoiding party designations on the ballot was insufficient to protect the Minnesota judiciary from the dangers of partisan involvement. In *Moon v. Halverson*, 206 Minn. 331, 288 N.W. 579 (1939), a candidate for registrar of deeds, an office designated by statute as nonpartisan, had solicited and received the endorsement of a political party. The court held that the Minnesota nonpartisan statute prescribed only that the candidate's party affiliation could not appear on the ballot and that the candidate could not declare his party when filing for office. The statute did not forbid party endorsement of candidates for nonpartisan office. 288 N.W. at 581. Justice Loring, joined by Justice Olson, concurred specially to add that this statute was not sufficient to protect the State's judiciary from the dangers of partisan pressure, which he felt had been at work:

> When candidates for such offices were placed on a non-partisan ballot it was, it seems to me, the purpose of the legislature to lift the judgeships above sordid political influence and to free the candidates from obligation to a political party so that if elected they might render judicial instead of partisan political decisions on matters where party programs, party interests or even prominent party leaders might be involved. The abuse and accusations of party treason which have been heaped upon some judges in the recent past because of decisions thought to be contrary to the interests of an indorsing party ought to be evidence enough of the impropriety of party indorsements and of their purpose to induce partisan political rather than impartial judicial decisions.

Id. at 581-82.

More recently, the court in *Peterson v. Stafford*, 490 N.W.2d 418, 425 (Minn. 1992), stated that the nature of judicial office requires the "holder studiously to avoid parti-

san politics, refrain from all discussions of public issues and restrict one's membership and participation in organization to those primarily of a professional nature."

Additionally, the Boards have adduced evidence of the necessity of reform measures in the form of affidavits by a former governor, Arne H. Carlson, and a former Chief Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court, A.M. (Sandy) Keith. Chief Justice Keith was a member of the Minnesota Supreme Court when the Court considered and approved the amendments to Canon 5. He testified that, based on his experience, if the Minnesota Code were changed to permit partisan activity, judges would be under pressure to "decide cases in ways that would impress the judge's supporters favorably," and eventually, partisanship would damage the public's confidence in the judiciary. Governor Carlson testified: "For the public to read newspaper headlines that a political party has endorsed and will work to elect a particular candidate would greatly harm the public's confidence in the independence of the judiciary." Both Chief Justice Keith and Governor Carlson testified that they believed that allowing judicial elections to become partisan contests would discourage many qualified candidates from seeking election.

The Boards have also produced a news account of the dangers partisan elections have posed in Texas, which included interviews with witnesses who believed that judges' decisions were affected by the need for political and financial support and that the public perceived "that justice is for sale in this state." Editorials from Texas newspapers reported a public perception that rulings were influenced by campaign obligations. The testimony at the 1997 hearing before the Minnesota Supreme Court on the proposal to amend Canon 5 was replete with references to the undesirable situation existing in other States with partisan judicial elections, particularly Texas. *Amendment to Canon 5 of the Code of Judicial Conduct: Hearing Before the*

Minnesota Supreme Court, No. C7-81-300, at 32, 36, 50, 65-68 (1997).

In contrast to the evidence amassed by the Boards, the plaintiffs have not adduced evidence tending to disprove the threat to the integrity or reputation of the judiciary from involvement with partisan politics. *See Shrink Mo.*, 120 S. Ct. at 908. This is an issue where "a long history, a substantial consensus, and simple common sense," *Burson*, 504 U.S. at 211, 112 S. Ct. 1846, combine to show that regulation is necessary to protect the institution of the judiciary from the dangers of partisanship and corruption. The record suffices to support the Minnesota Supreme Court's assessment that the threat of actual and apparent corruption is real and reform measures are necessary. *Cf. Eu v. San Francisco Democratic Cent. Comm.*, 489 U.S. 214, 229, 109 S. Ct. 1013, 103 L. Ed. 2d 271 (1989) (striking ban on party endorsement of candidates in party primaries where there was no evidence that ban served purpose of preventing fraud and corruption). Additionally, there is record evidence showing that without protection from partisan pressures, the State will be less able to recruit judicial candidates of the highest caliber.

The dissent contends that Canon 5 is not necessary because it does not achieve its stated end. *Infra* at 899-900 [265a-266a]. The argument is not precisely that Canon 5 does not accomplish its end as far as it goes, but that it is underinclusive—in other words, that the measure does not eliminate all the conduct posing the threat the government claims to be addressing because a candidate may attend meetings of and accept endorsements from politically active groups other than political parties. The dissent contends that in cases burdening a fundamental right "failure to solve the entire asserted problem is fatal." *Infra* at 900 [266a] n. 44 (citing *44 Liquormart, Inc. v. Rhode Island*, 517 U.S. 484, 116 S. Ct. 1495, 134 L. Ed. 2d 711 (1996), and *City of Cincinnati v. Discovery Network, Inc.*, 507 U.S. 410, 418,

113 S. Ct. 1505, 123 L. Ed. 2d 99 (1993)). Wersal makes a similar argument, relying on *Carey v. Brown*, 447 U.S. 455, 100 S. Ct. 2286, 65 L. Ed. 2d 263 (1980), and *R.A.V. v. City of St. Paul*, 505 U.S. 377, 112 S. Ct. 2538, 120 L. Ed. 2d 305 (1992). These cases do not stand for such a broad rule. Generally, underinclusiveness of a speech regulation is not an independent ground for invalidating the regulation, but rather points to the possibility that the government is discriminating on the basis of content or that the government's asserted interest is not truly pressing. *See City of Ladue v. Gilleo*, 512 U.S. 43, 51-53, 114 S. Ct. 2038, 129 L. Ed. 2d 36 (1994); *Glickman v. Wileman Bros. & Elliott, Inc.*, 521 U.S. 457, 493, 117 S. Ct. 2130, 138 L. Ed. 2d 585 (1997) (Souter, J., dissenting). When underinclusiveness of a regulation betrays content-discrimination, the standard of review must be raised to strict scrutiny. For instance, *R.A.V.* invalidated an ordinance prohibiting fighting words directed at some groups, but not others. The Supreme Court held that the principle for distinguishing between fighting words that were prohibited by the ordinance and those that were not had nothing to do with the rationale for permitting regulation of fighting words in the first place, but instead amounted to content discrimination. Therefore, the Court could not apply the relaxed standard appropriate for review of regulations of fighting words. 505 U.S. at 386, 112 S. Ct. 2538. The ordinance failed under strict scrutiny review. *Id.* at 395-96, 112 S. Ct. 2538. In this case, we have already established that Canon 5 discriminates on the basis of content (though not on the basis of viewpoint) and that we must conduct strict scrutiny. *Supra* at 863-64 [198a-199a].

In cases in which underinclusiveness of a regulation suggests that the regulation is not truly necessary to further a compelling governmental interest, the government's obligation is to "establish the empirical reality of the problems it purports to be addressing." *Glickman*, 521 U.S. at 493, 117

S. Ct. 2130 (Souter, J., dissenting). As part of our strict scrutiny, we have determined that the State established that a candidate's use of political parties in judicial campaigns poses a real threat to the State's compelling interests. *Supra* at 861-71 [194a-213a]. Thus, we have already undertaken the heightened scrutiny that underinclusiveness of a regulation would suggest is necessary.

But even if the cases cited by the dissent and Wersal indicated that underinclusiveness poses a First Amendment problem in its own right, these cases concern only arbitrary underinclusiveness, which arises when the principle for distinguishing regulated conduct from non-regulated conduct does not promote the government's asserted purpose. In *Carey*, 447 U.S. at 457, 464, 100 S. Ct. 2286, the challenged regulation prohibited residential picketing other than labor picketing in order to protect residential privacy. In *Discovery Network*, 507 U.S. at 415, 113 S. Ct. 1505, the city banned use of newsracks to distribute commercial handbills, but not newspapers, as a way of preventing newsracks from becoming a safety hazard and eyesore. The types of picketing and newsracks, respectively, that were regulated posed no greater threat to the asserted governmental interest than those that were exempted from regulation, and the regulations were thus invalid. *See Carey*, 447 U.S. at 465, 100 S. Ct. 2286; *Discovery Network*, 507 U.S. at 424-28, 113 S. Ct. 1505. In *44 Liquormart* a ban on advertising alcoholic beverages was invalid where any connection between the advertising ban and the State's desired result of reducing alcohol consumption would have been "purely fortuitous." 517 U.S. at 506-07, 116 S. Ct. 1495 (Opinion of Stevens, J.).

In contrast to these cases, when underinclusiveness results from a choice to address a greater threat before a lesser, it does not run afoul of the First Amendment. *See, e.g., Cornerstone Bible Church v. City of Hastings*, 948 F.2d 464, 470-71 (8th Cir. 1991); *Stretton v. Disciplinary Bd.*, 944

F.2d 137, 146 (3d Cir. 1991) ("[W]e cannot say that the state may not draw a line at the point where the coercive effect [of judicial campaign fund-raising], or its appearance, is at its most intense—personal solicitation by the candidate."). Indeed, a categorical rule against underinclusiveness for its own sake would coerce governments to regulate speech more broadly than they consider necessary, which is hardly the usual goal of First Amendment jurisprudence.[17] Here, the State has shown that a candidate's use of political parties in judicial campaigns poses a greater threat to the compelling state interests than involvement of other kinds of groups. *See infra* at 39-40 [221a-222a]. Therefore, the State did not violate the First Amendment in so limiting Canon 5.

B.

As the final step of our review of the three restrictions on Wersal's political activity, we ask whether they are narrowly drawn to address the compelling state interests. *See California Democratic Party v. Jones*, 530 U.S. 567, 120 S. Ct. 2402, 2412, 2414, 147 L. Ed. 2d 502 (2000); *Brown v. Hartlage*, 456 U.S. 45, 54, 102 S. Ct. 1523, 71 L. Ed. 2d 732 (1982) (restriction must operate without "unnecessarily circumscribing protected expression").

The Minnesota Supreme Court has attempted to prevent judicial candidates from incurring, or seeming to incur, debts to political parties that could compromise their independence, while allowing them alternative means of communicating subjects of valid interest to voters. Candidates may, for instance, speak to gatherings other than political organization gatherings; appear in newspaper, television, or other media advertisements supporting their candidacy; and distribute pamphlets and other promotional literature.

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[17] It is significant that the dissent in this case first argues that the Minnesota Supreme Court has violated the Constitution in enacting Canon 5, and then makes the antithetical assertion that it has not gone far enough.

Canon 5(B)(1). Furthermore, candidates may establish committees to campaign for them in various ways, including obtaining public statements of support (other than from political organizations). Canon 5(B)(2).

Wersal argues that since various other States and the drafters of the ABA Model Code of Judicial Conduct have not found it necessary to forbid attendance at party gatherings, acceptance of party endorsements, and identification of party affiliation, Minnesota's restrictions must be broader than necessary. But Wersal relies on the laws of States that have in fact limited political activity by measures similar to those before us.[18] There is also the authority of *Letter Carriers* and the other cases in which courts held it was proper to limit partisan political activity of executive employees. *See supra* at 867-68 [198a-200a].

The Party contends that the prohibition on disclosing party affiliation is not narrowly tailored because it prohibits disclosing past party affiliation as well as present. The Judicial Board states that it "simply prevents the judge from affirmatively stating his *current* political affiliation." However, the report submitted to the Minnesota Supreme Court at the time the party affiliation language was adopted states that it would prohibit candidates from identifying

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[18] *E.g.*, Fla. Code of Jud. Conduct Canon 7(C)(3) (imposing various limits on speaking at political gatherings, including prohibition on announcing party affiliation); Ky. Sup. Ct. R. 4.300, Canon 5(A)(2) (allowing candidate to state party affiliation only in response to direct question); Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 20, § 1404(B)(6) (West 1991 & Supp.) (making it a ground for removal of judge from office to make party affiliation publicly known in connection with campaign for office); Or. Code of Jud. Conduct JR 4-102, 4-104 and Or. Rev. Stat. § 249.015 (1999) (candidate shall not publicly identify candidate's political party membership except by registering to vote); S.D. Code of Jud. Conduct Canon 5(C)(1)(a)(ii) (permitting candidate to identify party affiliation only to vote); Wash. Code of Jud. Conduct Canon 7(A)(1)(e) (same).

themselves "as past or present members of a political organization." The language was adopted as proposed. The Minnesota Supreme Court apparently concluded that the public would infer that identification of past membership was tantamount to identification of present membership. *See In re Kaiser*, 111 Wash. 2d 275, 759 P.2d 392, 395 (1988) (en banc) (concluding judge violated prohibition on stating party affiliation by stating past affiliation). It was therefore reasonable to extend the prohibition on stating party affiliation to include past affiliation as well, lest the measure be rendered ineffective.

The Party further contends that Canon 5 is not narrowly tailored because Canon 5(A)(3) applies to a candidate's supporters as well as to the candidate. Specifically, Maxim argues that he had to avoid "seeking out any relationship with Gregory Wersal" in order to avoid coming within the scope of persons who were prohibited by Canon 5(A)(3) from doing for Wersal what he could not do for himself—i.e., attending a party gathering or seeking a party endorsement. Similarly, the members of Wersal's campaign committee contend that the restriction is overbroad because the committee was prohibited from seeking a party endorsement of Wersal. This argument has two parts: first, that the regulation is overinclusive because it affects third parties who have a relationship with Wersal; and second, that the regulation is vague because third parties cannot predict under what circumstances their actions will be imputed to Wersal.

Two district court cases have anticipated the overinclusiveness issue. In *Concerned Democrats v. Reno*, 458 F. Supp. 60, 65 (S.D. Fla. 1978), and *California Democratic Party v. Lungren*, 919 F. Supp. 1397 (N.D. Cal. 1996), courts held that state laws prohibiting political party endorsements of judicial candidates or of all nonpartisan candidates, respectively, were not narrowly tailored because they restricted the political parties' behavior when it

was only necessary to restrict the candidate's behavior. *Lungren* assumed, arguendo, that the State had a compelling interest in preventing nonpartisan office holders from engaging in partisan activity, but held that the law "misse[d] the mark" in addressing that interest:

> The evil sought to be combatted is the unseemly partisanship of nonpartisan officeholders once they are in office, not the partisanship of political parties (which, of course, is the very nature of political parties). Section 6(b) purports to prevent officeholders from being "beholden" to political parties by imposing a ban on the parties' speech about candidates for office, rather than (as the Supreme Court approved in *Letter Carriers*) a ban on the partisan political conduct of the officeholders themselves. The distinction is crucial. The government has an interest in the manner in which its elected officials conduct themselves while in office. The government does not and cannot have a legitimate interest in silencing the speech of third parties about the qualifications and political views of candidates for those offices.

919 F. Supp. at 1402.

These district court cases convincingly reason that because the State's compelling interest is in the rectitude of the candidate, a narrowly tailored restriction will regulate expressions by the candidate, not third parties. However, the language of Canon 5(A)(3) is so limited. It does not purport to govern what other persons do, but what the candidate authorizes or knowingly permits them to do. The canon therefore does not affect persons not subject to the candidate's authority and control. *See Johnson v. Holzemer*, 263 Minn. 227, 116 N.W.2d 673, 679 (1962) ("knowingly permit" extends only to persons having right of authoritative control over actor who are actually aware of his or her activity). Canon 5(A)(3) simply prohibits the candidate from accomplishing by the acts of an agent what the

candidate is forbidden to personally. The Director of the Lawyers Board, the body charged with enforcing Canon 5(A)(3) in Wersal's case, confirms that there is no threat of disciplinary action without the candidate himself authorizing or permitting the action of the supporter. Insofar as Canon 5(A)(3)(a) refers to members of the candidate's family, it does not limit their activities, but rather affects the candidate's actions towards them: the candidate shall "encourage" them to adhere to the standards applicable to the candidate. As for persons who are within the candidate's authority and control as members of the candidate committees authorized by Canon 5(B)(2), they have voluntarily assumed that relation, and therefore may subject themselves to certain restraints which are necessary to make effective the restrictions on the candidate. *Cf. Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. at 581-82, 93 S. Ct. 2880 (Appendix to the Court's opinion) (United States Civil Serv. Comm'n Form No. 1236, which Congress intended to serve as its definition of the general proscription against partisan activities, *id.* at 572-74, 93 S. Ct. 2880, prohibits "activity by indirection" when, by collusion or coercion, employee causes another to do what employee may not do directly). The limitation of Canon 5's reach to the candidate and to persons within the candidate's control thus distinguishes this case from *Eu*, 489 U.S. at 221, 109 S. Ct. 1013, in which there was an "outright ban" on political parties endorsing candidates.

The Party argues that a candidate's supporters cannot tell under what circumstances their actions will be imputed to the candidate. A restriction on speech must not be so vague that people of ordinary intelligence cannot tell what it prohibits. *Broadrick v. Oklahoma*, 413 U.S. 601, 607, 93 S. Ct. 2908, 37 L. Ed. 2d 830 (1973). *But see Berger v. Supreme Court*, No. 87-3935, 1988 WL 114792, at *3 (6th Cir. Oct. 31, 1988) (notice requirements less stringent in enforcing non-criminal code of judicial conduct than if cri-

minal penalties at stake). Canon 5(A)(3)(c) limits the scope of its language by adding the requirement that the candidate's permission be "knowing." This requirement prevents the sort of violation by mistake the non-candidate plaintiffs claim has chilled their speech. *See Chulchian v. City of Indianapolis*, 633 F.2d 27, 31 (7th Cir. 1980) (ordinance prohibiting person from "permitting" conduct includes requirement that person know of conduct and therefore is not unduly vague). Moreover, both Canon 5(A)(3)(a), dealing with family members, and Canon 5(A)(3)(c), dealing with authorizing or knowingly permitting others to act, include the concept of the candidate's right to control the speaker. *Johnson*, 116 N.W.2d at 679. Canon 5(A)(3) is therefore not unduly vague.

C.

The Party contends that the restrictions on a candidate's partisan activity violate its rights to equal protection because Canon 5 restricts association with political parties, but not other organizations that could affect a judge's independence or the public's perception of that independence. We have already determined that the restraints on Wersal's speech and association are necessary to serve a compelling state interest. To conclude that the same restraints violate the Equal Protection Clause, we would have to determine that Canon 5 burdens the rights of political party members more than others and that "such differential treatment is not justified." *California Med. Ass'n v. FEC*, 453 U.S. 182, 200, 101 S. Ct. 2712, 69 L. Ed. 2d 567 (1981). In *Broadrick*, in rejecting a First Amendment overbreadth challenge to Oklahoma's restrictions on partisan activities by government employees, the Supreme Court also rejected an equal protection challenge to the same law:

> Appellants also claim that § 818 violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment by singling out classified service employees for restrictions on partisan political expression while leaving

> unclassified personnel free from such restrictions . . . . [T]he legislature must have some leeway in determining which of its employment positions require restrictions on partisan political activities and which may be left unregulated. And a State can hardly be faulted for attempting to limit the positions upon which such restrictions are placed.

413 U.S. at 607 n. 5, 93 S. Ct. 2908 (citation omitted).

Our discussion regarding the State's interest in the independence of its judiciary demonstrates how Minnesota has historically viewed partisanship as a particular threat to the integrity of its courts, *supra* at 869-71 [209a-212a], and we need not reiterate this discussion. Restrictions reaching only partisan, rather than nonpartisan, political activity have been upheld in other cases. *See Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. at 562, 93 S. Ct. 2880; *Bauers v. Cornett*, 865 F.2d 1517, 1524-25 (8th Cir. 1989) (application of statutes to nonpartisan activity would have raised a different constitutional question than application to partisan activity). Political parties specialize in the business of electing candidates and have a powerful machinery for achieving that end, including large membership and fund-raising organizations. Those parties are simply in a better position than other organizations to hold a candidate in thrall. Moreover, because political parties have comprehensive platforms, obligation to a party has a great likelihood of compromising a judge's independence on a wide array of issues. Finally, legislatures are bodies in which, for the most part, the members owe allegiance to a political party, not only for financial support and endorsement in their campaigns for office, but also for political support within the legislative process itself. No single legislator has the power to enact laws. Therefore, the sharing of common partisan affiliation plays an integral role in enactment of legislation. If the judiciary is then expected to review such legislation neutrally, a State may conclude that it is crucial that the

judges not be beholden to a party responsible for enactment of the legislation, or to one that opposed it.

It is also relevant that a judge's participation in associations other than political parties is regulated by Canon 4, which imposes broad requirements that judges avoid involvement that could cast doubt on their impartiality or interfere with proper performance of their judicial duties. At the Minnesota Supreme Court's 1997 hearing on amending Canon 5, DePaul Willette, Executive Secretary of the Judicial Board, testified that the danger of judicial candidates affiliating with single-issue interest groups was adequately addressed by the provision of Canon 5 prohibiting announcement of the candidate's views on disputed legal or political issues, Canon 5(A)(3)(d)(i). *Amendment of Canon 5 of the Code of Judicial Conduct: Hearing before the Minnesota Supreme Court*, No. C7-81-300, at 12-13 (1997).

We conclude that the State has justified its differential treatment imposing greater restrictions on a judicial candidate's partisan political activities than on association with other kinds of organizations.

V.

We turn next to Wersal's claim that Canon 5's "announce" clause, which prohibits judicial candidates from announcing their "views on disputed legal or political issues,"[19] violates his free speech rights because it is not

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[19] Canon 5(A)(3)(d)(i) provides that a judge or a candidate for judicial office shall not:

> (i) make pledges or promises of conduct in office other than the faithful and impartial performance of the duties of the office; announce his or her views on disputed legal or political issues; or misrepresent his or her identity, qualifications, present position or other fact, or those of the opponent.

narrowly tailored to achieve any compelling state interest.[20] We have already determined that the interests proffered by the State to justify this restriction are compelling governmental interests of the highest order, so we proceed to the next step of our inquiry and address whether the restriction is necessary to further these interests. *See United States v. Playboy Entertainment Group, Inc.*, 529 U.S. 803, 120 S. Ct. 1878, 1891, 146 L. Ed. 2d 865 (2000); *see also Brown v. Hartlage*, 456 U.S. 45, 53-54, 102 S. Ct. 1523, 71 L. Ed. 2d 732 (1982).

A.

As we have discussed, it is consistent with the essential nature of campaigns for legislative and executive offices for candidates to detail and make promises about the programs that they intend to enact into law and to administer. For judicial officers, however, a State may determine that this mode of campaigning, insofar as it relates to how judges will decide cases, is fundamentally at odds with the judges' obligation to render impartial decisions based on the law and facts. At the time of the campaign, the candidate simply cannot predict what the facts or arguments in a particular case may be, the precise way in which legal issues will present themselves, or other crucial factors that need be consi-

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[20] Wersal also challenges the announce clause as being vague. However, his argument is based solely on the clause's relationship to Canon 5(A)(3), which prevents him from "knowingly permit[ting]" others to announce his views on his behalf. We have already held *supra* at 875 that the "knowingly permit" language is not unconstitutionally vague, and we therefore reject this claim. Furthermore, our clarification of the "knowingly permit" language is dispositive of the Party's claim that the announce clause is unconstitutional as applied to third parties. Candidates are subject to discipline only when third parties act as agents of the candidate or have voluntarily assumed a relationship with the candidate as a member of the candidate's campaign committee. The Code does not regulate the independent activities of third parties.

dered before a court issues a final decision. *See Berger v. Supreme Court*, No. 87-3935, 1988 WL 114792, at *3 (6th Cir. Oct. 31, 1988) ("[T]he very purpose of the judicial function makes inappropriate the same kind of particularized pledges and predetermined commitments that mark campaigns for legislative and executive office.") (internal quotations omitted); *Buckley v. Illinois Judicial Inquiry Bd.*, 997 F.2d 224, 227 (7th Cir. 1993) (free discussion of judicial candidate's views conflicts with the "historically more deeply rooted" concept of justice under the law); *Stretton v. Disciplinary Bd.*, 944 F.2d 137, 142 (3d Cir. 1991) (prejudging cases at campaign stage makes mockery of the concept of an impartial judiciary and undermines public confidence in rule of law).

Canon 5's announce clause restrains candidates from making statements in their campaigns about their views on disputed legal and political issues, and thus prevents candidates from implying how they would decide cases that might come before them as judge. Wersal maintains that this restriction is not necessary because Canon 5 already protects the State's interests through bans on candidates making pledges or promises of conduct in office other than the faithful performance of their duties and on candidates manifesting bias or prejudice inappropriate to the judicial office. *See* Canon 5(A)(3)(d)(i) & (ii).

To be sure, the pledges and promises provision of Canon 5(A)(3)(d)(i) addresses the type of campaign conduct that most blatantly subverts the judicial office—pledges by candidates to make specific decisions on the bench. However, it does not reach the full range of campaign activity that can undermine the State's interests in an independent and impartial judiciary. It would not, for example, reach declarations by candidates that legislation relating to hot-button social issues is or is not constitutional. It also would not apply to candidates who publicized their opinions about how unsettled legal issues should be resolved. Both instances

raise the specter that the candidates are declaring how they would decide questions that might come before them as judges in order to gain support for their candidacies. *See Laird v. Tatum*, 409 U.S. 824, 836 n. 5, 93 S.Ct. 7, 34 L.Ed.2d 50 (1972) (Rehnquist, J.) (Mem. on Motion for Recusal) ("In terms of propriety, rather than disqualification, I would distinguish quite sharply between a public statement made prior to nomination for the bench, on the one hand, and a public statement made by a nominee to the bench. For the latter to express any but the most general observation about the law would suggest that, in order to obtain favorable consideration of his nomination, he deliberately was announcing in advance, without the benefit of judicial oath, briefs, or argument, how he would decide a particular question that might come before him as a judge.").

When a candidate is later called upon as a judge to preside over cases involving disputed issues about which he or she has made campaign announcements, the judge is placed in an awkward, if not impossible, position. Should the judge properly determine, for example, that a law violates the Constitution, having already expressed this opinion during the campaign, the judge risks appearing as though he or she prejudged the case rather than gave it due consideration in light of the law, arguments, and facts. This apparent rigidity can undermine the faith of the litigants and public in the judge's decision and in the State's judicial system generally. *See Stretton*, 944 F.2d at 142. On the other hand, should the judge reach a conclusion that departs from the opinion expressed during the campaign, the judge risks being assailed as a dissembler. Thus, the judge may hesitate to decide the case in a way that might lose votes at the next election. Certainly, many judges have the fortitude to resist such pressures, but we do not doubt that the potential of supporter abandonment at the next election can weigh heavily on judges who know they were elected

based on representations they made during the last campaign. *Cf. The Federalist No. 78*, at 471 (Alexander Hamilton) (Clinton Rossiter ed. 1961) (arguing against periodic popular election of judges because it gives them "too great a disposition to consult popularity" when rendering decisions).

Wersal does not explain why he believes the canon restricting candidates from manifesting bias or prejudice inappropriate to judicial office fully protects the State's interests left unshielded by the ban on candidates making improper pledges and promises, and we conclude it does not. Canon 5(A)(3)(d)(ii) was added to the Code when the Minnesota Supreme Court updated its ethical rules and brought them closer to the 1990 version of the ABA Model Code, some twenty-two years after the announce clause was promulgated; and we do not read the two provisions to address the same conduct. The manifestation of bias provision, fairly read, is directed at words and conduct that display personal animus against persons or groups, such as women or minorities. Even if it could be construed to cover announcements about how a candidate would decide cases if elected, settled rules of statutory interpretation require that we decline to read it in this way. *See Radzanower v. Touche Ross & Co.*, 426 U.S. 148, 153, 96 S. Ct. 1989, 48 L. Ed. 2d 540 (1976) (subsequently enacted law cast in general terms should not be interpreted to supplant one dealing with specific subject unless absolutely necessary to give effect to the language). We therefore reject any implication that the adoption of the manifestation of bias provision rendered the announce clause unnecessary.

Wersal also challenges the sufficiency of the evidence the Boards have put forth to justify this speech restriction. He argues that the State did not fulfill its evidentiary obligation as a matter of law because the Boards did not prove there was any concrete evidence showing the harmfulness of candidates announcing their views in the public record

before the Minnesota Supreme Court at the time the court adopted the announce clause. This argument misapprehends the Boards' evidentiary burden in this case.

In *Nixon v. Shrink Missouri Government PAC*, 528 U.S. 377, 120 S. Ct. 897, 907-08, 145 L. Ed. 2d 886 (2000), for example, the Court stated that to sustain a law setting contribution limits. it was enough for the State to adduce evidence substantiating legislative concerns about the actual or perceived corruption associated with large contributions. As we have noted *supra*, the corroborating evidence included a state senator's sworn statement that "large contributions have 'the real capacity to buy votes,'" contemporaneous newspaper accounts tending to show public officials were actually corrupted by contributions, and the recent overwhelming passage of a statewide initiative indicating that the majority of voters had concluded that contribution limits were necessary. *Id.* None of these items were shown to be part of the public record before the legislature at the time the legislature enacted the law.

Burson v. Freeman, 504 U.S. 191, 112 S. Ct. 1846, 119 L. Ed. 2d 5 (1992), provides an example of the type of corroborating evidence that can support a speech restriction subject to strict scrutiny. In *Burson*, the Court entertained a challenge to a law establishing a 100-foot "campaign-free" zone around polling places that was designed to protect against voter intimidation and election fraud. As evidence showing that the law was necessary, the Court looked to nineteenth century ballot reforms and traced the development of restrictions on election-day electioneering. *Id.* at 202-05, 112 S. Ct. 1846. It also noted that all fifty States limit access to areas in or around polling places. *Id.* at 206, 112 S. Ct. 1846. Taken together, this evidence revealed a "widespread and time-tested consensus" about the problems of voter intimidation and voter fraud which corroborated the State's conclusion that some sort of

"campaign-free" zone around voting compartments was necessary. *Id.*

In this case, the Boards have met their evidentiary burden by offering evidence of widespread and long-standing consensus among members of the bench and bar about the necessity of restrictions on campaign speech that conveys a judicial candidate's propensity to decide cases in a particular way. Three-quarters of a century ago, the ABA promulgated the nation's earliest formalized standards of professional conduct for judges, the Canons of Judicial Ethics. Canon 30 provided that a candidate for judicial office "should not announce in advance his conclusions of law on disputed issues to secure class support." Canon 30 (1924). Developed and drafted by a committee chaired by Chief Justice William Howard Taft and later approved by delegates to the ABA's 1924 annual meeting, *see* Jeffery M. Shaman et al., *Judicial Conduct and Ethics* § 1.02 (3d ed. 2000), the canon reflects the views of members of the legal profession as to what ethical restrictions are needed to protect the integrity of the judiciary. Many state courts reached similar conclusions and adopted the ABA Canons for their own jurisdictions, *id.* at § 1.02 n. 14, including the Minnesota District Judges Association, whose members voted to do so unanimously at a conference in 1950.

In the early 1970s, the ABA committee charged with drafting the Model Code of Judicial Conduct included a restriction on candidate speech similar to the restriction contained in 1924 code. *See* ABA Model Code of Jud. Conduct Canon 7(B)(1)(c) (1972). The ABA's 1972 Model Canon 7 is the pattern on which Minnesota's announce clause is based, and a majority of States that have an elected judiciary promulgated ethical rules prohibiting candidates from announcing their views on disputed legal and political issues. *See* Patrick M. McFadden, *Electing Justice: The Law and Ethics of Judicial Election Campaigns* 85 (1990). In 1990, when the ABA revised its Model Code, it adopted a

different formulation of the candidate speech restriction, but one that continues to restrict more speech than the pledges-and-promises provision. Model Canon 5 restrains candidates from making "statements that commit or appear to commit the candidate with respect to cases, controversies or issues that are likely to come before the court." ABA Model Code of Jud. Conduct Canon 5(A)(3)(d)(ii) (1990). A number of States have revised their rules in accordance with the 1990 "commitment" canon.[21] Today, most States with an elected judiciary have campaign speech restrictions patterned after either the 1972 or 1990 ABA model canons.[22]

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[21] *See, e.g.*, Ariz. Sup. Ct. R. 81, Canon 5(B)(1)(d)(ii); Ark. Code of Jud. Conduct Canon 5A(3)(d)(ii); Cal. Code of Jud. Ethics Canon 5(B); Fla. Code of Jud. Conduct Canon 7(A)(3)(d)(ii); Ga. Code of Jud. Conduct Canon 7(B)(1)(c); Ill. Sup. Ct. R. 67, Canon 7(A)(3)(d)(i); Kan. Sup. Ct. R. 601A, Canon 5(A)(3)(d)(ii); Ky. Sup. Ct. R. 4.300, Canon 5(B)(1)(c); La. Code of Jud. Conduct Canon 7(B)(1)(d)(ii); N.Y. Code of Jud. Conduct Canon 5(A)(4)(d)(ii); Ohio Code of Jud. Conduct Canon 7(B)(2)(d); S.D. Stat., ch. 16-2, app., Canon 5(A)(3)(d)(ii); Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 10, Canon 5(A)(3)(d)(ii); Wash. Code of Jud. Conduct Canon 7(B)(1)(c)(ii).

[22] A few States proscribe only improper campaign pledges and promises. *See, e.g.*, Or. Code of Jud. Conduct JR 4-102(B); Utah Code of Jud. Conduct Canon 5(C)(1). Other States impose different, yet significant speech restrictions. *See, e.g.*, Tex. Code of Jud. Conduct Canon 5(2)(i) (no "indicat[ing] an opinion on any issue that may be subject to judicial interpretation by the [judge/candidate if elected into office], except that discussion of an individual's judicial philosophy is appropriate if conducted in a manner which does not suggest to a reasonable person a probable decision on any particular case"); Wis. Sup. Ct. R. 60.06(3) (prohibiting "suggestions of conduct in office which appeal to the cupidity or partisanship of the electing or appointing power"); *see also* Ala. Canons of Jud. Ethics Canon 7(B)(1)(c) (candidate "shall not announce in advance the candidate's conclusions of law on pending litigation"); Colo. Code of Jud. Conduct Canon 7(B)(1)(c) (candidate may not "announce how the judge would rule on any case or issue that might come before the judge").

Minnesota Supreme Court decisions such as *Moon v. Halverson*, 206 Minn. 331, 288 N.W. 579 (1939), and *Peterson v. Stafford*, 490 N.W.2d 418 (Minn. 1992), also provide insight into factors that would have informed the court's decision to adopt the announce clause. As we have discussed, in both cases Minnesota justices commented on historical problems resulting from close proximity between judicial elections and partisan politics. It is reasonable to infer that the prohibition on candidates announcing their views on disputed issues was intended in part to prevent judicial campaigns from becoming routine political contests, thereby jeopardizing the independence and integrity of the State's judiciary. This inference is corroborated by evidence showing that the Minnesota Bar Association, District Judges Association, and the Conference of Chief Judges recently recommended against the adoption of the less-restrictive 1990 ABA commitment canon because of concerns that liberalizing Canon 5's speech restrictions would politicize judicial elections.

The plaintiffs have offered no contradictory evidence which might increase the need for a more extensive showing by the State. *See Shrink Mo.*, 120 S. Ct. at 906. Wersal argues that the Lawyers Board's refusal to enforce the announce clause calls into question the Boards' attempt to demonstrate that the clause serves compelling state interests. That the Director of the Lawyers Board stated she would not prosecute violations under the clause as a matter of prosecutorial discretion until it was upheld by a court is not sufficient to increase the evidentiary burden. The Lawyers Board's determination was based on the likelihood of a constitutional challenge to the announce clause and the limited resources available to the Board for defending such a suit; it has little bearing on whether certain campaign announcements can impair or be perceived to impair judicial independence and impartiality.

The Lawyers and Judicial Boards have shown that this restriction furthers compelling governmental interests in the independence and actual and perceived impartiality of the judiciary.

B.

Having concluded the restriction furthers compelling interests, we must examine whether it is narrowly tailored. *See California Democratic Party v. Jones*, 530 U.S. 567, 120 S. Ct. 2402, 2414, 147 L. Ed. 2d 502 (2000); *Brown*, 456 U.S. at 54, 102 S. Ct. 1523.

The district court construed the announce clause to apply only to discussion of a candidate's predisposition on issues likely to come before the candidate if elected into office. *Republican Party v. Kelly*, 63 F. Supp. 2d 967, 986 (D. Minn. 1999). None of the plaintiffs claimed in their opening briefs on appeal that the district court erred by interpreting the language as it did. Wersal attempts to raise the issue in his reply brief. It is well established that issues not argued in an opening brief cannot be raised for the first time in a reply brief,[23] and we will therefore analyze the announce clause as it has been construed by the district court. We should add, however, that if the issue were properly before us, we would not find error in the district court's interpretation. The longstanding principle that courts should construe laws to sustain their constitutionality, *see, e.g., Edward J. DeBartolo Corp. v. Florida Gulf Coast Bldg. & Constr. Trades Council*, 485 U.S. 568, 575, 108 S. Ct. 1392, 99 L. Ed. 2d 645 (1988), the Minnesota

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[23] *See, e.g., United States v. Vincent*, 167 F.3d 428, 432 (8th Cir. 1999), *cert. denied*, 528 U.S. 848, 120 S. Ct. 124, 145 L. Ed. 2d 105 (1999); *South Dakota Mining Ass'n v. Lawrence County*, 155 F.3d 1005, 1011 (8th Cir. 1998); *United States v. Davis*, 52 F.3d 781, 783 (8th Cir. 1995); *French v. Beard*, 993 F.2d 160, 161 (8th Cir. 1993); *see also United States v. Darden*, 70 F.3d 1507, 1549 n. 18 (8th Cir. 1995) ("Absent some reason for failing to [raise issue in opening brief], we will not consider an issue first raised in a reply brief.").

Supreme Court's adherence to this interpretive principle, *see In re R.A.V.*, 464 N.W. 2d 507, 509 (Minn. 1991), *rev'd on other grounds by R.A.V. v. City of St. Paul*, 505 U.S. 377, 112 S. Ct. 2538, 120 L. Ed. 2d 305 (1992), and the Judicial Board's endorsement of the narrowed construction form a solid foundation for the district court's conclusion. Furthermore, the interpretation accords with *Stretton*, where the Third Circuit interpreted identical language similarly. 944 F.2d at 144.[21]

As construed by the district court, the restriction prohibits candidates only from publicly making known how they would decide issues likely to come before them as judges. A similar construction was determined to be narrowly drawn in *Stretton*, 944 F.2d at 144, and we are persuaded that it is narrowly drawn here as well. These sorts of campaign announcements are (or can appear to be) calculated to show that the candidate will decide cases in a certain way if elected into office, and the implication that the candidate will carry through with his campaign announcements can haunt the candidate on the bench to the detriment of the State's judicial system. *See id. But see Buckley*, 997 F.2d at 229 (questioning whether limiting

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[21] In claiming error, Wersal relies heavily on *Buckley v. Illinois Judicial Inquiry Bd.*, 997 F.2d 224, 229-30 (7th Cir. 1993) where the Seventh Circuit declined to read an analogous canon narrowly. Having carefully studied both *Stretton v. Disciplinary Bd.*, 944 F.2d 137 (3d Cir. 1991), and *Buckley*, we believe that Stretton is more persuasive. *Buckley* gives little heed to "our task [as courts] to construe [laws] so as to comport with constitutional limitations" if consistent with the will of the lawmaker. *United States Civil Serv. Comm'n v. National Ass'n of Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. 548, 571, 93 S. Ct. 2880, 37 L. Ed. 2d 796 (1973). *Buckley* also distinguished *Stretton* in part due to factors not present in this case or in *Stretton*: a disciplinary body's determination that a judge violated the clause when he commented truthfully on his past record and counsel's convoluted arguments that the announce clause contained an implied "right of reply." 997 F.2d at 229.

construction would significantly circumscribe scope of announce clause, giving example of civil war in Yugoslavia as likely to come before courts as persecution defense to deportation).

Wersal has stated that the restriction prohibits candidates from discussing virtually every topic related to their campaigns, and the dissent maintains that it effectively bans all campaigning. But nothing in Canon 5(A)(3)(d)(i) restricts candidates from discussing or publicizing information about their character, fitness, integrity, background (with the exception of their political affiliation), education, legal experience, work habits, and abilities, which are subjects the Minnesota General Assembly has determined to be highly relevant to a candidate's qualification for office. *See* Minn. Stat. § 480B.01, subd. 8 (listing criteria by which commission on judicial selection shall evaluate persons applying for judicial vacancies to be filled by gubernatorial appointment). The Minnesota Supreme Court has also indicated that candidates may discuss and state their views on how they would handle administrative duties if elected. *See Bundlie v. Christensen*, 276 N.W.2d 69, 72 (Minn. 1979) (no ethical violation under Canon 7(B), the precursor to Canon 5(A), when candidate made cutting costs of courtroom administration part of campaign platform); *cf. Ackerson v. Kentucky Judicial Ret. & Removal Comm'n*, 776 F. Supp. 309, 314 (W.D. Ky. 1991) (restraint on campaign speech about court administration would violate First Amendment).

We further believe the Minnesota Supreme Court would conclude that general discussions of case law or a candidate's judicial philosophy do not fall within the scope of the announce clause. In 1990 the Judicial Board issued an advisory opinion, which the Board has since made known to judicial candidates by letter, stating that Canon 5 does not prohibit candidates from discussing appellate court decisions. *See* Minnesota Bd. on Judicial Standards, Informal

Op. 10/10/1990. The Judicial Board has also approved extensive lists of sample questions that interested voters could pose to judicial candidates consistent with Canon 5. These questions are wide-ranging and include such topics as a candidate's judicial philosophy, issues relating to the administration of justice in criminal, juvenile, and domestic violence cases, and the candidate's perception of a judge's role in the judicial system.

While it is true that some judicial ethics advisory bodies in other States have interpreted language identical to the announce clause to reach topics such as these, *see, e.g., Berger v. Supreme Court*, 598 F. Supp. 69, 74 (S.D. Ohio 1984) (disciplinary counsel's position that truthful criticisms of judicial administration and incumbents prohibited); *see generally*, Patrick M. McFadden, *Electing Justice: The Law and Ethics of Judicial Election Campaigns* 86-87 (1990) (collecting advisory opinions stating that discussion of court administration, court rules, criminal sentencing, judicial philosophy, published court decisions, etc. were improper), we believe the Minnesota Supreme Court would view the matter consistently with the Judicial Board. The Judicial Board has been intimately involved with the process of amending the Code over the years, and its views are likely to reflect those of the Minnesota Supreme Court. As the Third Circuit in *Stretton* put it, "[w]e would be naive not to recognize that the [Judicial Board's] position is, at the very least, a straw in the wind indicating the direction that [the supreme] court will go." *Stretton*, 944 F.2d at 143. Furthermore, some of the advisory opinions of other States' ethics boards conflict with the Minnesota Supreme Court's decision in *Bundlie* on whether the announce clause prohibits announcements about judicial administration.

Wersal cites several decisions in which courts have struck down similar canons as overly broad restrictions on speech. *E.g., Buckley*, 997 F.2d at 228-29; *Beshear v. Butt*, 863 F. Supp. 913, 917-18 (E.D. Ark. 1994); *ACLU v. Florida*

Bar, 744 F. Supp. 1094, 1097 (N.D. Fla. 1990); *J.C.J.D. v. R.J.C.R.*, 803 S.W.2d 953, 956-57 (Ky. 1990). However, these cases proceed on the assumption that judicial candidates are left with little to discuss and to put before the voters other than their "name, rank, and serial number," *Buckley*, 997 F.2d at 227, "biographical data," *ACLU v. Florida Bar*, 744 F. Supp. at 1098, or "professional history," *J.C.J.D.*, 803 S.W. 2d at 956, and are therefore distinguishable.

The announce clause, as construed by the district court, is narrowly tailored to further compelling governmental interests.

VI.

Wersal contends that Canon 5(B)(2),[25] which prohibits judicial candidates from personally soliciting campaign funds, violates the First Amendment because it is not narrowly tailored.

We have no difficulty in concluding that Canon 5(B)(2) is necessary to serve compelling state interests. Indeed, Wer-

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[25] In full, Canon 5(B)(2) provides:

> A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions or solicit publicly stated support. A candidate may, however, establish committees to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting campaign contributions and public support from lawyers, but shall not seek, accept or use political organization endorsements. Such committees shall not disclose to the candidate the identity of campaign contributors nor shall the committee disclose to the candidate the identity of those who were solicited for contribution or stated public support and refused such solicitation. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

sal does not dispute these points. Raising campaign funds, a practical requirement for judicial candidates who face popular election, has been identified as presenting "the greatest of all conflicts" between necessity and judicial impartiality. *See* E. Wayne Thode, *Reporter's Notes to Code of Judicial Conduct* 98 (ABA 1973). Judges, more than officeholders in other branches of government, risk the appearance that those who contribute to their campaigns can impermissibly influence governmental processes. When judges obtain funds from a group that has an interest in the outcome of litigation, such as the plaintiffs' or defendants' bar, judges can appear beholden to that group for their accession to office, creating the expectation that the judges will favor their benefactors accordingly. *See In re Fadeley*, 310 Or. 548, 802 P.2d 31, 40 (1990) ("A judge's direct request for campaign contributions offers a *quid pro quo* or, at least, can be perceived by the public to do so."); *cf. Nixon v. Shrink Mo. Gov't PAC*, 528 U.S. 377, 120 S. Ct. 897, 905-06, 145 L. Ed. 2d 886 (2000) (public perception that large donors can "call the tune" for candidates can harm democratic processes); *Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1, 27, 96 S. Ct. 612, 46 L. Ed. 2d 659 (1976) (per curiam). Even if judges receive contributions from a broad cross-section of persons and interests, the appearance of impropriety hangs over them if they adjudicate cases in which a litigant or counsel has contributed, or refused to contribute, to their campaign. *See Stretton*, 944 F.2d at 145 (noting the unseemliness of judges presiding over cases in which lawyers have helped fund judicial campaign chests).

Recognizing the unique difficulties presented by judicial campaign fundraising, Canon 5(B)(2) seeks to insulate judicial candidates from the solicitation and receipt of funds while leaving open ample alternative means for candidates to raise the resources necessary to run their campaigns. To this end, Canon 5(B)(2) provides that candidates may establish campaign committees to conduct fundraising on their

behalf. The Code does not limit the amount individuals can contribute to the candidate's campaign fund or the amount the campaign committee may raise. Canon 5(B)(2) imposes only two restrictions related to campaign finance on the committee: its members cannot disclose to the candidate the identity of contributors or those who were solicited to contribute but declined, and they cannot permit the campaign funds to be used for private benefit.

Wersal's objection to this fundraising arrangement is limited: He does not challenge the campaign committee setup or the restrictions placed on the committee's members. Rather, he suggests that a narrowly tailored rule would allow candidates to solicit funds from large groups and to send out letters over their signatures requesting money. He argues that the State's concern over the corrupting influence of money on judicial candidates is fully redressed by the provision that prevents the campaign committee from revealing the identity of campaign contributors.

Wersal is correct that the knowledge-screening provision of Canon 5(B)(2) lessens several of the problems attendant on judicial campaign fundraising; we reject his conclusion, however, that it obviates the need for limitations on candidates soliciting funds from groups personally or by letter. When a judicial candidate seeks funds directly from those who stand to gain from the candidate's decisions in office, the State may conclude that his activity is incongruous with the decorum of judicial office whether or not the candidate is shielded from knowing who ultimately contributed. Particularly when candidates target groups who have pecuniary or ideological interests in litigation likely to come before the court, the mere act of solicitation can contribute to the appearance, accurate or not, that "justice is for sale" and the expectation of impermissible favoritism. *See Fadeley*, 802 P.2d at 40.

Wersal makes a secondary argument that when Canon 5(B)(2) deprives him of the opportunity to solicit funds from large groups or by mail it prevents him from running an effective campaign. The Supreme Court has said that restrictions on campaign financing must leave candidates with the ability to accumulate sufficient resources for effective advocacy. *Shrink Mo.*, 120 S. Ct. at 908-09; *Buckley*, 424 U.S. at 21, 96 S. Ct. 612. Citing the impracticability of his being accompanied by a campaign committee member who could "utter the magic words" to solicit funds, Wersal argues his statewide campaign efforts were frustrated. However, no provision in the Code specifies that members of a campaign committee must request contributions in person. Canon 5(B)(2) expressly permits committees to conduct campaigns through mailings, brochures, and advertisements. Wersal has not alleged that these alternatives are ineffective fundraising mechanisms. Accordingly, he has not demonstrated that Canon 5's restrictions stifled his campaign efforts. *See also Shrink Mo.*, 120 S. Ct. at 909 ("a showing of one affected individual does not point up a system of suppressed political advocacy that would be unconstitutional under *Buckley*").

In a separate argument, the Party asserts that Canon 5(B)(2) is not narrowly tailored as applied to third parties. Much of this argument is based on a misreading of a Code section we have already clarified. Canon 5(A)(3)(c), which states that candidates "shall not authorize or knowingly permit any other person to do for the candidate what the candidate is prohibited from doing," is violated only when persons act as agents of the candidate. As a result, no ethical violations occur if third parties solicit or expend funds independently of Wersal and his campaign committee.

The district court did not err in determining that this restriction is narrowly tailored to further compelling state interests.

VII.

The judgment of the district court is affirmed.

BEAM, Circuit Judge, dissenting.

At the outset, I admit that, insofar as I have been able to discern, Minnesota has a judicial system peopled with individuals of intellect, integrity and character, fully capable of making difficult decisions, consistent with the interests of the people of the state. However, such a condition is beside the point because many other states have achieved the same essential goals without trenching upon clearly established constitutional rights. The court today holds that laws prohibiting candidates for public office from voicing their views as to issues pertinent to their conduct in office, or their opponent's conduct in office, or from appearing or speaking to like-minded citizens, are not only permissible but are apparently necessary to a well-ordered democracy. Because in my view such a result flatly contradicts the edicts of the First Amendment, I respectfully dissent.

The court and I part ways in three critical respects. First, the court misconstrues Minnesota law, reading it with such latitude as to contradict one-hundred fifty years of development in Minnesota's judicial selection processes. Second, the court supplants constitutionally guaranteed rights with its own notions of preferred judicial policy. Finally, the court countenances restrictions on fundamental, protected activity that are neither necessary nor narrowly tailored. In the final analysis, the court sustains a set of restrictions which probably have no practical effects other than to quash election-related speech and association, and thus undermine a democratic process—precisely the fear that prompted the drafting of the First Amendment.

I.

Prior to even contemplating the suppression of otherwise protected First Amendment activity, a state must assert a compelling interest. Presumably, that interest must reflect

a state's actual and lawfully adopted policy. The court accepts as "undeniably compelling" appellees assertion that in effecting Canon 5, the Minnesota Supreme Court furthered Minnesota's interest in maintaining the "independence" of its judiciary. *Ante* at 864 [200a]. Certainly, all states share such an interest generally—such is the preferred state of the American judiciary.[25] But different sovereigns give different meanings to the term "independence." I believe the court has misconstrued Minnesota precedent, and in doing so has used it to justify a policy prescription that lacks support in Minnesota's constitutionally established public regimen.

The court, without further analysis, simply accepts appellees' claim that Minnesota has "historically pursued the ideal of an independent judiciary." *Ante* at 865 [202a].

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[25] The court distorts my views on judicial independence, implying, *ante* at 864 [200a], that I would sacrifice such independence, and, presumably, its alleged by-product, "justice under law," on an altar of "democratic self-government." (I assume the court is referring to my concern for the democratic election process.) The court's statements are seriously at variance with my views and my arguments in dissent. This case is *not* about rules under which a neutral judiciary dispenses justice under canons of ethics designed to support judicial independence, *once the selection process is over*. I wholly agree that such a system should exist and be designed to enhance, through reasonable state regulation, the ideals of judicial independence. This case *is* about the point at which free speech and association collide directly with an attempt by the Minnesota Supreme Court to manage (and I believe over manage) the election process in the name of judicial independence of some definition.

My dissent simply and appropriately recognizes and discusses these competing interests and reaches a result in line with the Constitution and Supreme Court precedent. It is the court that insists that "one of the principles should give way completely to the other," that is, judicial independence, whatever that proves to be under the court's analysis, should trump the First Amendment when the election of a *judge* is at stake. There is absolutely no support in federal law for the court's position.

It relies heavily on the Minnesota Supreme Court's observation in *Peterson v. Stafford*, 490 N.W.2d 418 (Minn. 1992), that while the federal and its own system differ, they both "create and maintain an independent judiciary as free from political, economic and social pressure as possible." *Id.* at 420. In this, the court finds license to sustain as consistent with Minnesota public policy anything which it considers to enhance judicial independence. But this latter term is subject to broad and varied interpretations, and merely begs the question "independent from what?" While appointed judges are "independent" from the electorate, elected judges, once elected, are hardly "dependent" on the electors, and are "independent" from other elected officials. However, we are not called upon to sustain our own notions of "independence," but Minnesota's. We must therefore read the Minnesota Supreme Court's statement in *Peterson* in light of that state's public policy as prescribed by its citizens. As it turns out, Minnesotans have consistently rejected all attempts to narrow or curtail their elective franchise when it comes to selecting judges. Rather, they have repeatedly strengthened popular control over their judiciary.

The debate whether to appoint, retain or directly elect judges predates Minnesota's founding. The federal drafters debated it in Philadelphia. *See The Anti-Federalist Papers & the Constitutional Convention Debates* 120-27 (Ralph Ketcham ed., Mentor 1986). Alexander Hamilton defended their subsequent choice in print, arguing that elected judges would suffer "too great a disposition to consult popularity to justify a reliance that nothing would be consulted but the Constitution and the laws." *The Federalist No. 78*, at 471 (Clinton Rossiter ed. 1961). Anti-Federalists hotly contested that position. Brutus counseled trepidation at the advent of a judiciary "altogether unprecedented in a free country" which was to be "rendered totally independent, both of the people and the legislature." Brutus XI, Letter

of January 31, 1788, in Ketcham, *ante*, at 293. *See also*, George Mason, *Speech in Opposition to the Constitution*, and Patrick Henry, *Speech to the Virginia Ratifying Convention*, both in Ketcham, *ante*, at 174, 212 (arguing that the federal judiciary made the courts too far removed from the citizenry).

The federal founders ultimately decided upon lifetime appointments, subject to good behavior, placing us (ostensibly) beyond the cavil of partisan activity and populist suasion. U.S. Const. art. III. As federal judges, we understandably have a bias for this method. Yet, we should not confuse the rationale behind our federal system with some universal judicial *raison d'etre*, for different sovereigns value different policies. Some elect only a few officers and rely largely on appointments, while others insist on electing virtually every office-holder. Since Hamilton and Brutus debated, the arguments on each side have been well known, and were so at Minnesota's founding.

Minnesota's first judiciary arrived under the auspices of the United States with the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which provided the Northwest Territories with congressionally-appointed judges and governor-appointed local magistrates. Northwest Ordinance §§ 4, 7 (1787); *see generally*, Hiram F. Stevens, *History of the Bench & Bar of Minn.* (1904). In 1849, Congress created the Territory of Minnesota and provided a similarly appointed judiciary. Act of Congress, March 3, 1849 §§ 2, 9, 11, 9 Stat. 403. Minnesotans did not warm to these arrangements. As one state founder noted, "it has been the complaint of the Territory ... that we have to submit to have our Judges sent to us and have no voice in the selection ... and [the people] have looked forward with hope to the time when they could elect their own men." *The Debates & Proceedings of the Minn. Constitutional Convention* 495 (1857) ("*Democratic Debates & Proceedings*"). That chance came

in 1857 when Congress authorized Minnesotans to draw up a constitution. Act of Congress, Feb. 26, 1857, 11 Stat. 166.

Minnesota chose an interesting time to seek statehood. With the Civil War three years off, and the Supreme Court's decision in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 60 U.S. (19 How.) 393, 15 L. Ed. 691 (1856), one year past, any prospective new state necessarily stood in the eye of a hurricane.[27] Against this backdrop, on June 1, 1857, Minnesotans elected delegates to a constitutional convention. One historian gave the following description. "The feeling between and within political parties was bitter. Republicans were not just Republicans but 'Black Republicans' and 'Nigger Lovers.' The Democrats were divided into 'Regular' and 'Moccasin' Democrats, but were united for convention purposes." Julius E. Haycraft, *Territorial Existence & Constitutional Statehood of Minnesota* (1946), republished in 1 Minn. Stat. Ann. 145, 151; *see generally*, William Anderson, *A History of the Constitution of Minnesota* (1921). Moreover, "[s]o intense was the feeling that the Republicans and Democrats would not meet in the same convention. The result was two conventions; delegates of each party held separate sessions in different rooms in the old capitol." Haycraft, *ante*, at 151. The two bodies met separately, largely without consultation. Even after a conference committee produced a compromise document, each convention refused to sign a document soiled by the other's signatures, so each separately signed largely identical documents. *Id.* at 151-52.

The records of these proceedings demonstrate that Minnesota's founders grappled with precisely the same

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[27] Abolitionist sentiment ran high in Minnesota and, while not reaching the levels in other states, did result in some violence. Interestingly, among the slaves brought to Minnesota during the pre-civil war period was Dred Scott, who from 1835-40 lived with his "owner," Surgeon J. Emerson, at Fort Snelling. Stevens, *ante*, at 30-36.

contours as their federal forebears. The Republicans steadfastly insisted on an elected judiciary, but did debate the form of those elections. *Debates & Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention for the Territory of Minn.* 334-35, 402 (1858) ("*Republican Debates & Proceedings*"). The question of politics arose when a Mr. Galbraith proposed an amendment requiring that judicial elections never be held on the same day as an election for any other office. He reasoned that "the excitements of mere political and party issues should be kept as far as possible from the election of the judges—that the people should elect the Judges, upon their merits as judges—that they should be elected with the view of making them as independent of political parties as possible." *Id.* at 406. In opposition, a Mr. Lowe argued, "I do not believe it will be possible to separate the election of judges from political considerations." *Id.* The convention rejected Galbraith's amendment, and opted for concurrent judicial elections.

The Democratic convention proved far more contentious. After a committee failed to agree on a judicial selection method, the issue came to the convention floor. *Democratic Debates & Proceedings*, *ante*, at 493-509. Those favoring the Hamiltonian appointment model did so for two reasons, fear of populism and fear of political entanglement.

First, they feared the populism that might result from an elected judiciary. One vigorous opponent, a Mr. Setzer, argued:

> The great object of an appointed Judiciary, is to secure stability upon the part of the government, by having a power within the State conservative enough to restrain the waves of popular excitement, when they sweep over us as they have done in different States for years past. . . . Judges represent no constituency and are elected by no constituency. They represent nothing except the abstract ideas of equity and justice.

Id. at 495-96. The "abstract ideas of equity and justice" heralded were those set out in *Dred Scott*—the culmination of the grand experiment that seventy years earlier Brutus had observed was "altogether unprecedented in a free country." And the "waves of popular excitement" that so rankled delegates were the popular sentiments of radical abolitionist fervor. He continued, "[w]e see it in Wisconsin, in Iowa, and in all those States where popular excitement in reference to negro-worship and disunion has had its effect upon an elective Judiciary." *Id.*

Minnesota's founding debate did not turn entirely on slavery. Those opposed to an elected judiciary also raised precisely the same, eminently sensible concerns troubling the court today. Another delegate, a Mr. Meeker, argued:

> I contend that the Judges who are elected, are elected by parties, and are the mere fuglemen of caucuses. The best trickster or the best manager of caucuses is just as likely to be the nominee of a party as the most learned man in the nation. . . . [T]he greatest curse that could befal [sic] any people would be the establishment of a political court . . . . [A]nd our Judges . . . if they are to be elected, must necessarily be essentially political Judges; they cannot be anything else.

Id. at 500. They feared the instability such a system would create. "Whichever party is in the ascendancy will change the system of jurisprudence to its own standard, and there will be no security, no stability in anything." *Id.* at 501. Accordingly, a Mr. Sherburne recommended adopting the venerable appointment mechanisms common along the east coast. *Id.* at 497.

The prevailing delegates, those favoring judicial elections, met these arguments head-on. Said a Mr. Emmett:

> We hear a great deal of talk about an independent Judiciary. The phrase is in everybody's mouth. What does it mean? Independent of whom? Independent of

> what? Independent of the people ... ? I say then that in order to correct the errors of Judges—and it may be important to correct them,—the office should be made elective.

Id. at 503. And as regards the fear that politics would infect an elected system, he continued, "if the people are incapable of selecting their Judges, they are also incapable of selecting the man who is to appoint the Judges .... The governor always selects men belonging to his own political party, while the people often select them regardless of parties." *Id.* A Mr. Curtis responded to Mr. Sherburne: "[I]s a sufficient argument in favor of an appointed Judiciary, that it is old? Is it all that can be said in its favor, that it has grown hoary by age and usurpation—because it is all covered over from one end to the other by corruption and fraud?" *Id.* at 498.

As these exchanges demonstrate, the arguments surrounding election and appointment were well known and well met. Despite the concerns raised then and marshaled again by the court today, Minnesotans of both parties opted for an elected judiciary. Ultimately, they more feared the potential politics of an appointed bench and saw popular election as the proper remedy. Given the political climate, they desired more control over their judiciary. *That was the policy adopted by the people of Minnesota.*

Minnesota's electorate has never since intimated a change in this policy. Indeed, it has frequently reaffirmed judicial accountability to the electorate.[25] In 1912, for in-

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[25] Minnesota courts have consistently struck down rules depriving judicial offices of their elective nature. *See State ex rel La Jesse v. Meisinger*, 258 Minn. 297, 103 N.W.2d 864, 866 (1960); *State ex rel Smallwood v. Windom*, 131 Minn. 401, 155 N.W. 629, 633 (1915); *State ex rel Roseker v. Dreger*, 97 Minn. 221, 106 N.W. 904, 906 (1906); *State ex rel Jordan v. Bailey*, 37 Minn. 174, 33 N.W. 778, 779 (1887).

stance, the legislature required judicial candidates to run on a non-partisan ballot. *Peterson*, 490 N.W.2d at 420. That statute in no way restricted a candidate's political activities or ability to educate the voters as to his merits, opinions or values. *Moon v. Halverson*, 206 Minn. 331, 288 N.W. 579, 580-81 (1939). The reform's objective was to ensure that candidates were elected on their own merits. *Id.* at 580. A merit-based election necessitates the flow of information regarding candidates to the electorate.

Minnesota has four times rejected the so-called Missouri Plan, whereby the governor could fill vacancies by non-partisan appointment, and such appointees would later be subject only to a retention vote. Maynard E. Pirsig, *The Proposed Amendment of the Judiciary Article of the Minn. Constitution*, 40 Minn. L. Rev. 815, 815-19 (1955-56); *Peterson*, 490 N.W.2d at 421 n. 14. Again, voters retained their system of direct electoral control.

In 1948, a commission recommended that candidates run against a specific incumbent rather than against the field. *Peterson*, 490 N.W.2d at 421 n. 14. It argued, "[w]here several incumbents are running for re-election, each should stand or fall on the basis of his own record. The present system does not permit this since opposing candidates run against the field." *Report of the Constitutional Comm'n of Minn.* 43-44 (Oct. 1, 1948). Minnesota law was amended accordingly. See 14A Minn. Stat. Ann. § 204B.06; *Gustafson v. Holm*, 232 Minn. 118, 44 N.W.2d 443 (1950) (sustaining requirement that judicial candidates declare which specific seat is sought). Such seat-specific elections increase the electorate's focus on a specific judge's conduct.

Thus, since first permitted to select its own judiciary, Minnesota has consistently favored electorally-responsive judges. Its citizens have considered and rejected the

court's policy concerns,[29] and have rejected appointment and retention systems that would have curtailed or eliminated popular control. Minnesota has repeatedly affirmed its citizens' right to elect their judges, and has bolstered that franchise with laws enhancing merit-based elections and furthering the flow of information regarding the candidates to the electorate.[30] Canon 5 subverts this policy. The suppression of election-related speech and association

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[29] Indeed, the Minnesota Supreme Court specifically refused to resurrect the policy debates undergone at the constitutional convention.

> There are many arguments, on grounds of both principle and expediency, against the election of judges, either in special cases or generally. Such arguments do not enter into our consideration. The fundamental law of this state is, and always has been, that the selection of judges must be submitted to the electors.

La Jesse, 103 N.W.2d at 866.

[30] The court attempts to divorce my review of Minnesota judiciary history from that undertaken by the Minnesota Supreme Court in *Peterson*, and paints the latter as justifying its conclusion today. *Ante* at 866 [204a] n. 13. But the review undertaken in *Peterson* supported a regulation wholly different from that before us today. In *Peterson*, the Minnesota Supreme Court reconciled Minnesota history with a measure requiring the judicial election ballot to designate incumbent jurists as such. 490 N.W.2d at 424. The Minnesota Court found that initiative consistent with Minnesota history and sustained it because it *enhanced* the flow of information to Minnesota voters, which stands in stark contrast to the measure before us today which *suppresses* that same flow of information. Rather than address what the Minnesota Supreme Court meant by "independent" in the proper context, the court simply transports the Minnesota court's purposely cabined conclusions into today's opinion. But as my review, and that undertaken in *Peterson* indicate, in the context of Minnesota public policy, an "independent judiciary" means judges elected by well-informed, independent voters. In undermining that process by stifling the free flow of information, the court merely exacerbates the partial transfer of the Minnesota judicial selection machinery into the hands of other narrow political influences as noted elsewhere in this dissent.

does not enhance the franchise. In fact, it militates against the public's ability to elect judges based on their merits by denying citizens a reasonable vehicle for self-information. The court assures that candidates may still discuss their "character, fitness, integrity, background (with the exception of their political affiliation), education, legal experience, work habits and abilities." *Ante* at 882 [233a]. However, these are simply not all of the qualities that piqued the interest of Minnesota's founders, nor those which fully inform voters who are charged with the selection of Minnesota's judiciary.

The question here is whether Minnesota has expressed a sufficiently fundamental policy interest in "independent" judicial elections to even warrant our proceeding to the next stage of our constitutional inquiry. Certainly, in *Peterson*, the Minnesota Supreme Court instructed us that Minnesota has an interest in making its judiciary as independent "as possible." 490 N.W.2d at 420. But as the Minnesota Supreme Court cannot trump its citizens' prescribed policy, "as possible" cannot be read to include restrictions which curtail the elective franchise. Because Canon 5 does precisely that, I believe the court has clearly misapplied Minnesota law.

II.

The preceding discussion may prove largely academic, because the restrictions at issue in this case were not enacted by the Minnesota legislature but rather were created by the Minnesota Supreme Court itself. While that court has not yet ruled that its own regulations comport with fundamental state policy, it could just as easily do so. And as a federal court, we defer to state courts on questions of state law. Indeed, we wade into such questions only in the most dire of circumstances, for instance where state law is being intentionally tortured to discriminate against a protected minority, *see, e.g., Bouie v. City of Columbia*, 378 U.S. 347, 84 S. Ct. 1697, 12 L. Ed. 2d 894 (1964), or where an error of

state law works a singular national impact, *see, e.g., Bush v. Gore*, 531 U.S. 98, 121 S. Ct. 525, 148 L. Ed. 2d 388 (2000). But while we ought not inject ourselves into the state law question, we are charged with enforcing federal law. Federal law, and in particular the Constitution, operate to protect the rights of citizens against encroachment by both federal and state governments. In my view, even accepting arguendo that the people of Minnesota did actually intend to immunize their judicial candidates from some of the rigors of an election campaign, Canon 5 still flatly contradicts controlling precedent and violates the Constitution.

The court repeatedly emphasizes the importance of judicial independence, a proposition with which I heartily agree. Judicial independence is of the utmost importance to a fair and well-functioning judicial system. Moreover, I agree that a state has an interest not only in warding off an actual breakdown of that independence, but also the appearance of such. Every court to address this or a similar question has recognized the importance of this principle. Moreover, all have recognized, again rightly so, that by virtue of their function, judges fundamentally differ from other elected officials. The court cites extensively to these authorities. Yet the court omits noting that almost all of these courts have then further recognized that such policy notions cannot trump constitutionally-enshrined rights.[31]

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[31] *See e.g., Suster v. Marshall*, 149 F.3d 523 (6th Cir. 1998) (striking down restrictions on judicial campaign spending); *Buckley v. Illinois Judicial Inquiry Bd.*, 997 F.2d 224 (7th Cir. 1993) (striking down "announce" clause); *Stretton v. Disciplinary Bd. of the Supreme Court of Pa.*, 944 F.2d 137 (3d Cir. 1991) (narrowing construction of "announce clause"); *Weaver v. Bonner*, 114 F. Supp. 2d 1337 (N.D. Ga. 2000) (striking down canon restricting advertising and election speech); *Butler v. Alabama Judicial Inquiry Comm'n*, 111 F. Supp. 2d 1224 (M.D. Ala. 2000) (restraining enforcement of campaign advertisement and conduct restrictions); *ACLU of Florida v. The*

The Constitution makes strict demands. Often times, important and justifiable public policy goals must bow before its restraints. As judges, we must put aside our inclinations as jurists, lawyers, residents, citizens, and parents, and enforce the Constitution's restraints. The Constitution protects the most basic elements of our democratic processes, in particular the rights of candidates and citizens to express and receive views pertinent to public office, and to associate in the election context with others of their own choosing. Because Canon 5 sharply curtails, if not outright bans these activities, regardless of how laudable its purpose, it must be struck down.

Because election speech and association lie at the heart of the First Amendment, any restriction thereof must survive strict scrutiny. *Eu v. San Francisco County Democratic Cent. Comm.*, 489 U.S. 214, 223, 109 S. Ct. 1013, 103 L. Ed. 2d 271 (1989). A restriction on otherwise protected activity must be necessary and narrowly tailored to serve a compelling state interest. *Id.* at 222, 109 S. Ct. 1013. "[I]t is the rare case in which ... a law survives strict scrutiny," *Burson v. Freeman*, 504 U.S. 191, 211, 112 S. Ct. 1846, 119 L. Ed. 2d 5 (1992), yet the court today, with little reservation, affirms a set of restrictions more sweeping in scope and effect than ever adopted elsewhere. I discuss in turn, the First Amendment rights implicated by the court's decision, the court's purported interests and the need for and tailoring of the challenged restrictions.

A.

The Supreme Court has consistently afforded election speech and association the highest protection. "The free ex-

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Florida Bar, 744 F. Supp. 1094 (N.D. Fla. 1990) (enjoining "announce" canon); *In re Chmura*, 461 Mich. 517, 608 N.W. 2d 31 (narrowing canon to prohibit only knowingly false statements), *cert. denied*, [531 U.S. 828], 121 S. Ct. 77, 148 L. Ed. 2d 40 (2000); *J.C.J.D. v. R.J.C.R.*, 803 S.W.2d 953 (Ky. 1991) (striking down "announce" and other campaign restrictions).

change of ideas provides special vitality to the process traditionally at the heart of American constitutional democracy—the political campaign." *Brown v. Hartlage*, 456 U.S. 45, 53, 102 S. Ct. 1523, 71 L. Ed. 2d 732 (1982). Few, if any, state interests prove sufficiently compelling to trump these activities. While "a state has a legitimate interest in upholding the integrity of their electoral process . . . , when a State seeks to uphold that interest by restricting speech, the limitations on state authority imposed by the First Amendment are manifestly implicated." *Id.* at 52, 102 S. Ct. 1523. Canon 5 runs roughshod over the clearly established speech and associational rights of candidates, political parties and the voting public. That alone should foreclose any thought of Canon 5's constitutionality.

Candidates for public office enjoy both speech and associational rights.

> The candidate, no less than any other person, has a First Amendment right to engage in the discussion of public issues and vigorously and tirelessly to advocate his own election and the election of other candidates. *Indeed, it is of particular importance that candidates have the unfettered opportunity to make their views known* so that the electorate may intelligently evaluate the candidates' personal qualities and their positions on vital public issues before choosing among them on election day.

Buckley v. Valeo, 424 U.S. 1, 52-53, 96 S. Ct. 612, 46 L. Ed. 2d 659 (1976) (emphasis added). To that end, the First Amendment protects the right to campaign and restricts states to preventing only actual fraud and corruption.[2] *Brown*, 456 U.S. at 55, 102 S. Ct. 1523.

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[2] The court cites *Burson* where the Supreme Court sustained the prohibition of "the solicitation of votes and the display or distribution of campaign materials within 100 feet of the entrance to a polling place." 504 U.S. at 193, 112 S. Ct. 1846. While not a traditional

Candidates similarly enjoy protected association rights. These interpose themselves "at the crucial juncture at which the appeal to common principles may be translated into concerted action, and hence to political power in the community." *Tashjian v. Republican Party of Conn.*, 479 U.S. 208, 216, 107 S. Ct. 544, 93 L. Ed. 2d 514 (1986). A candidate's association with a political party, organization or another candidate provides a basic means of election communication. Associational rights work hand in hand with a candidate's speech rights, for without the former, the latter may prove meaningless. "'The right to associate with the political party of one's choice is an integral part of this basic constitutional freedom.'" *Id.* at 214, 107 S. Ct. 544 (quoting *Kusper v. Pontikes*, 414 U.S. 51, 57, 94 S. Ct. 303, 38 L. Ed. 2d 260 (1973)).

The First Amendment protects not only speakers' rights, but also those of listeners. *Virginia State Bd. of Pharmacy v. Virginia Citizens Consumer Council, Inc.*, 425 U.S. 748, 96 S. Ct. 1817, 48 L. Ed. 2d 346 (1976). A campaign implicates not only the candidate's right to self-expression, but also voters' rights to receive the candidate's message. A state may not "hamstring [ ] voters seeking to inform themselves about the candidates and the campaign issues." *Eu*, 489 U.S. at 223, 109 S. Ct. 1013. Nor may a state limit public debate as "[i]t is simply not the function of government to 'select which issues are worth discussing or debating.'" *Brown*, 456 U.S. at 60, 102 S. Ct. 1523 (quoting *Police Dep't of Chicago v. Mosley*, 408 U.S. 92, 96, 92 S. Ct. 2286, 33 L. Ed. 2d 212 (1972)); *accord United States v. Playboy Entm't Group, Inc.*, 529 U.S. 803, 120 S. Ct. 1878, 146 L. Ed. 2d 865

"time, place, and manner" restriction in that it was content-specific, the rule curtailed speech only within that 100-foot bubble. *Id.* at 197, 112 S. Ct. 1846. Against a vast history of election fraud and intimidation at polling places, the Court permitted only an extremely narrow, location-specific restriction on campaign speech. *Burson* hardly supports the absolute bans imposed by Canon 5.

(2000). In short, "[a] state's claim that it is enhancing the ability of its citizenry to make wise decisions by restricting the flow of information to them must be viewed with some skepticism." *Eu*, 489 U.S. at 228, 109 S. Ct. 1013 (quotation omitted).

Voters' associational rights parallel their right to receive information. "To the extent that party labels provide a shorthand designation of the views of party candidates on matters of public concern, the identification of candidates with particular parties plays a role in the process by which voters inform themselves for the exercise of the franchise." *Tashjian*, 479 U.S. at 220, 107 S. Ct. 544.

A party's speech and association also receive protection, particularly in the election context. *Eu*, 489 U.S. at 224, 109 S. Ct. 1013; *First Nat'l Bank of Boston v. Bellotti*, 435 U.S. 765, 98 S. Ct. 1407, 55 L. Ed. 2d 707 (1978). In endorsing or inviting a candidate to speak, a party "reflects its members' views about the philosophical and governmental matters that bind them together [and] seeks to convince others to join those members in a practical democratic task," an election. *Colorado Republican Fed. Campaign Comm. v. FEC*, 518 U.S. 604, 615, 116 S. Ct. 2309, 135 L. Ed. 2d 795 (1996) (plurality opinion of Justice Breyer). Limitations on a party's ability to endorse a candidate "hamper[ ] the ability of a party to spread its message." *Eu*, 489 U.S. at 223, 109 S. Ct. 1013. "[A] political party has a right to . . . select a standard bearer who best represents the party's ideologies and preferences." *Id.* at 224, 109 S. Ct. 1013 (citations and quotations omitted). The suppression of a party's right to associate with candidates of its choice, renders it powerless.[23] "The Party's attempt to broaden the

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[23] The court relies in part on *Timmons v. Twin Cities Area New Party*, 520 U.S. 351, 117 S. Ct. 1364, 137 L. Ed. 2d 589 (1997), in which the Court sustained a ban on fusion candidates—those appearing on the ballot as representing more than one party. That law

base of public participation in and support for its activities is conduct u[illegible]niably central to the exercise of the right of association." *...shjian*, 479 U.S. at 214, 107 S. Ct. 544.

Canon 5 trenches upon these rights in a variety of ways. The "announce" clause, for instance, effectively bans campaigning itself. The court disagrees, saying "[t]he judicial candidate simply does not have a First Amendment right to promise to abuse his office." *Ante* at 862 [197a]. But the court proves too much. The Supreme Court established in *Brown* that no candidate for any office possesses such a right. "[T]he state may ban such illegal agreements without trenching on any right ... protected by the First Amendment." 456 U.S. at 55, 102 S. Ct. 1523. Beyond prohibiting fraud and corruption, and the appearance of the same, a state may prevent judicial candidates from prejudging or pledging outcomes in specific cases or even in particular types of cases. But beyond such, a state cannot further unreasonably curtail election-related speech.

The announce clause, however, bars discussion of *all* disputed legal and political issues. The court's narrowing construction to "issues likely to come before the candidate," *ante* at 881, is meaningless. *See Buckley v. Illinois Judicial Inquiry Bd.*, 997 F.2d 224, 229 (7th Cir. 1993) (recognizing the true scope of such a "limitation").[31] Even could such a

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governed form of the ballot but did not restrict parties from endorsing the candidate of their choice. This prevented small parties from bootstrapping their way into public election funds by endorsing a major party candidate, and then claiming the resulting votes. As it did not affect candidate or party speech and associational rights, the Court sustained the rule. That case does not support the banning of all election-related discussion and association.

[31] Construing similar language, similarly curtailed, Judge Posner noted:

> There is almost no legal or political issue that is unlikely to come before a judge of an American court, state or federal, of general jurisdiction. The civil war in Yugoslavia? But we have cases in which Yugoslavs resist deportation to that nation on the ground

category be properly cabined, it would still roam far beyond the narrow category of speech left unprotected by the Court in *Brown*. The court assures us, for instance, that a candidate may discuss his "judicial philosophy." *Ante* at 882 [234a]. I cannot fathom "disputed legal issues" more likely to come before a court than the proper role of stare decisis, narrow or strict construction, original intent and substantive due process. Yet are these not captured by the term "judicial philosophy?" The term is as sweeping as the court's allegedly narrow construction.[35]

Along with the announce clause, the restrictions on attending and speaking at party gatherings, and the bans on seeking or using endorsements, and on self-identifying as a party member similarly tread upon protected First Amendment rights. Obviously, by banning such activities, Canon 5 directly impacts the rights of judicial candidates. The court insists that this impact goes no further, that Canon 5 affects only the rights of candidates, and not those of any third parties. *Ante* at 873-75 [217a-220a]. But this cannot be, as laws that affect candidates necessarily affect voters. *Bullock v. Carter*, 405 U.S. 134, 143, 92 S. Ct. 849, 31 L. Ed. 2d 92 (1972). The court strives mightily to justify the impact wrought on candidates' rights, arguing for instance that judicial candidates have less interest in certain

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> that they face persecution . . . ; and some years ago the Illinois courts were embroiled in a custody fight involving a child who didn't want to return to the then Soviet Union with his Soviet parents.

Buckley, 997 F.2d at 229.

[35] To truly grasp the impact of today's opinion, one must consider the plight of the judicial candidate who in 2002 must decipher Minnesota ethical obligations. Between them, Canon 5, the district court's opinion and the court's opinion today supply three different versions of acceptable speech. Moreover, all three remain contingent on the Minnesota Supreme Court's agreeing with the court's construction, for if it does not, the judicial candidate may still face sanctions. The threat of chilled speech is too great to countenance.

types of policy debate than do other types of candidates. *Ante* at 862 [196a]. Such arguments do little to justify collateral effects on the rights of others.[36]

Canon 5 affects third parties in a variety of ways. For instance, the announce clause curtails voters' rights to hear a candidate's views on those issues most pertinent to future conduct in office. By preventing candidates from seeking endorsements, Canon 5 potentially prevents voters and parties from gauging a candidate's attitude towards a party, something central to many voters' decision-making processes. Despite the court's protestations, it also de facto curtails a party's ability to endorse the candidate of its choosing. Parties are unlikely to endorse their preferred candidate so long as they fear handing an opponent a potential election issue—specifically, the specter of an ethics violation—even if none exists. This in turn curtails voters' rights to hear parties' views as to candidates. Additionally, by preventing candidates from attending or speaking at party gatherings, Canon 5 trenches upon parties' rights to express themselves in the manner of their own choosing, specifically by presenting the candidate of their choice.

Our First Amendment rulings usually parse the hypothetical. We worry about "potential" chilled speech, and the supposed ill effects that might flow from quashed association. Presented only with the text of Canon 5, one might well hypothesize that restricting candidates' abilities to express their views and to associate with political parties would lead to two results: higher rates of incumbent retention; and disproportionate campaign fund-raising. This

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[36] Of course, the court belies its own contention with the argument, addressed *infra*, that political parties work a unique effect upon the electoral scheme. *Ante* at 872-73 [215a-217a], 876-77 [222a-225a]. How the court reconciles its concern with party involvement with its assurances that the rights of candidates alone are affected escapes me.

hypothesis follows from a rudimentary understanding of public campaigns and the judiciary.

Campaigns for public office, judicial, legislative or executive, necessarily favor incumbents. Incumbents have better name recognition, better resources, are usually better staffed, and barring some recent disaster, are afforded the presumptions of experience and competence. Of the three branches of government, the judiciary seems to least capture the public's attention. Judicial incumbents, therefore, may enjoy these benefits to an even greater extent.

Unlike most of our First Amendment cases, however, this case need not stick to the hypothetical. Canon 5 has been in effect in Minnesota for some time, in varying forms. We therefore can look to recent elections to see whether these supposed harms have come to pass. Minnesota is no exception to the rule that the public pays the least attention to the judiciary. Indeed, one Minnesota Supreme Court Justice has observed of judicial elections that "it's pretty darn hard to get people to care." *Amendment of Canon 5 of the Code of Judicial Conduct: Hearing Before the Minn. Supreme Court* 44 (1997). Election statistics bear this out. In 1996 one-half million voters cast a ballot in the Presidential race yet did not vote in the Supreme Court race. League of Women Voters of Minnesota, *Choosing Minnesota's Judges: An Examination of the Present System and Alternative Proposals* 6 (1998). Moreover, 86% of responding voters said they needed more information about judicial elections and 77% observed they got less information about judicial than other elections. *Id.*

Fund-raising and other election data demonstrate disturbing distortions in a supposedly democratic process.[27]

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[27] Prior to every Supreme Court election, the Minnesota State Bar Association holds a plebiscite between the candidates among its members. The results display in dramatic fashion the extent to which an incumbent may count on support from groups most vested

During the 2000 election cycle, of those judges up for election, only five of sixty-seven trial court benches were contested and only one of four appeals court judges faced a challenger. In 1998, only ten of eighty-nine trial court benches were contested.[38] Judicial fund-raising reflects the same bias. In the 2000 election, the four incumbent Supreme Court justices seeking re-election raised a combined $505,070.63. Of their opponents, only two raised sufficient funds to warrant disclosure. These two together raised only $23,582.67. Candidate Filings, Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board (2000). A stable judiciary is, on balance, a laudable pursuit and perhaps Minnesotans have no cause to find fault with any of their judges. But it is just as likely that, at least in part, these imbalances flow from a lack of information resulting from the suppression of election-related speech and association and from other impediments inherent in Canon 5.

Not surprisingly then, in recent history prior to the 1998 election which spawned this suit, only two incumbent judges had lost elections. *See* Mary Ellen Egan, *Judging for Himself*, City Pages 4-5 (June 17, 1998). The record details appellant Wersal's campaign difficulties, hamstrung by both fund-raising and speech limitations. Indeed, an ethics complaint forced him out of the 1996 campaign for fear of losing

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in the judiciary. Since 1974, incumbents have out-polled their challengers by the following margins: 1974: 91% to 9% and 85% to 15%; 1978: 77% to 23% and 95% to 5%; 1982: 95% to 5%; 1992: 61% to 39% and 85% to 15%; 1996: 75% to 25% and 90% to 10%. Minnesota State Bar Ass'n, *Judicial Elections Task Force Report & Recommendations* 32 Appendix D (1997). While this case has been pending, the 2000 election cycle has come and gone. I occasionally use the most recent data, which postdates the record on appeal.

[38] These numbers reflect a consistent trend. Since 1980, the number of contested trial benches of those facing election were as follows: 2 of 25; 0 of 25; 5 of 56; 9 of 54; 2 of 67; 4 of 93; 5 of 82; 6 of 42; 14 of 111. Minnesota State Bar Ass'n, *Judicial Elections Task Force Report & Recommendations* 7 (1997).

his law license and being unable to support his family. Another Supreme Court candidate, Michael Demoss, faced a similar problem after making comments about his views on abortion. With challengers unable to create traction by discussing actual issues, or to raise funds, the results in judicial elections are hardly surprising.

Minnesota's judicial elections thus reveal the precise results one might suspect Canon 5 would produce. Moreover, its chilling effects on electoral activity are precisely those which spurred the First Amendment. It might be naive to argue that incumbents must never be permitted to use their offices to bolster their own positions—such conduct seems inimical to politics generally. But American tradition has long recognized that the best defense against such conduct is the right of a people to freely associate, assemble and speak. It may be, as a matter of policy, that an appointed judiciary best protects our liberties. I certainly think so, and the court obviously agrees. But Minnesota has made a different choice, and having chosen an elective selection method it cannot then turn around and quash candidates' constitutionally guaranteed rights. The upshot is this: when a state opts to hold an election, it must commit itself to a complete election, replete with free speech and association. Certainly, a state may regulate corruption as in *Brown*, the integrity of the voting process as in *Burson* and the form of its ballot as in *Timmons v. Twin Cities Area New Party*, 520 U.S. 351, 117 S. Ct. 1364, 137 L. Ed. 2d 589 (1997). But the state may not unduly curtail speech and association, for they are too central to First Amendment interests in the election process.

B.

The court does not discuss the foregoing authorities. Rather, it tries to sidestep this entire doctrinal inconvenience with a simple argument—that judges are different. It surmises that given the nature of their office, judges, even when elected, warrant different treatment under the First

Amendment.[39] The court identifies three interests, all under the rubric of enhancing judicial independence, which it deems sufficiently compelling to warrant the suppression of fundamental rights: safeguarding a judge's ability to apply the law neutrally; maintaining the public confidence in judicial impartiality; and insulating judges from political pressure. *Ante* at 864 [200a], 867 [205a-206a]. Many courts have noted, and I agree, that judges differ from other officials. As a matter of constitutional law, however, the judiciary has no more or less right than any other coordinate branch to insulate itself from the rigors of public debate, particularly in the election context. The court embarks on a path long since foreclosed, as the Supreme Court has directly and pointedly refused to permit such specialized treatment, even given the court's stated concerns.

The judiciary may not rely on the "maintenance of confidence in the judicial system," essentially the interest advanced by the court today, as a justification for the suppression of protected expression. *Landmark Communications, Inc. v. Virginia*, 435 U.S. 829, 833, 98 S. Ct. 1535, 56 L. Ed. 2d 1 (1978). In *Landmark Communications*, Virginia attempted to rely on this interest to justify a statute making it a misdemeanor to report on confidential judicial

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[39] The court dallies briefly with an analogy between judges and civil servants, drawing heavily on *United States Civil Service Commission v. National Association of Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. 548, 93 S. Ct. 2880, 37 L. Ed. 2d 796 (1973). There, the Court found compelling the interests of forging a civil service capable of enforcing laws without regard to party allegiances, and in avoiding the appearance of bias among federal employees in order to maintain the public confidence. *Id.* at 565, 93 S. Ct. 2880. The analogy fails. Offices are made elective rather than appointive in order to introduce a degree of public control. Given the discretion that judges wield, that voters would desire such control is hardly surprising. The state's interests in these two areas are quite divergent.

disciplinary proceedings.[40] *Id.* Recognizing that "the law gives judges as persons, or courts as institutions ... no greater immunity from criticism than other persons or institutions," the Court ruled "neither the Commonwealth's interest in protecting the reputation of its judges, *nor its interest in maintaining the institutional integrity of its courts* is sufficient to justify the subsequent punishment of speech at issue here." *Id.* at 839, 841, 98 S. Ct. 1535 (quotation omitted, emphasis supplied). "[I]njury to official reputation is an insufficient reason for repressing speech that would otherwise be free [and] *the institutional reputation of the courts, is entitled to no greater weight in the constitutional scales.*" *Id.* at 841-42, 98 S. Ct. 1535 (quotation omitted, emphasis supplied).

Landmark Communications extended a well-established body of precedent forbidding judicial efforts at self-isolation from public debate. Potential "disrespect for the judiciary" and worries of the "disorderly and unfair administration of justice" cannot compel the suppression of protected expression. *Bridges v. California*, 314 U.S. 252, 270, 62 S. Ct. 190, 86 L. Ed. 192 (1941). In *Bridges*, the Court prevented a trial court from silencing newspaper editorial criticism of its conduct during ongoing legal proceedings, because:

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[40] The court may seek to cabin *Landmark Communications* as merely preventing the criminalization of speech whereas this case regards an administrative or professional sanction. The statute in *Landmark Communications* made the challenged conduct a misdemeanor and subjected the paper to a $500 fine. While criminal in form, the actual harm in that case was much less severe than the threat judicial candidates face in Minnesota. Failure to abide by ethical canons can subject a lawyer or a judge to sanction, removal or disbarment. In terms of gravity, the restrictions at issue here pose much the greater danger. *See In Re Primus*, 436 U.S. 412, 98 S. Ct. 1893, 56 L. Ed. 2d 417 (1978) (holding that a state's interest in effective judicial administration must bend before an attorney's First Amendment rights).

> The assumption that respect for the judiciary can be won by shielding judges from published criticism wrongly appraises the character of American public opinion .... [A]n enforced silence, however limited, solely in the name of preserving the dignity of the bench, would probably engender resentment, suspicion, and contempt, much more than it would enhance respect.

Id. at 270-71, 62 S. Ct. 190.

This argument grows all the stronger in the election context. In *Wood v. Georgia*, 370 U.S. 375, 379-80, 82 S. Ct. 1364, 8 L. Ed. 2d 569 (1962), the Court reversed a contempt order issued against a sheriff who told a grand jury that he opposed its having been empaneled. The state argued such conduct constituted a "clear and present danger" to the administration of justice. *Id.* at 387, 82 S. Ct. 1364. However, both the sheriff and the judges involved were elected officials charged with public responsibilities. *Id.* at 390, 395, 82 S. Ct. 1364. The sheriff, therefore, "had the right to enter the field of political controversy, particularly where his political life was at stake. The role that elected officials play in our society makes it all the more imperative that they be allowed freely to express themselves on matters of current public importance." *Id.* at 394-95, 82 S. Ct. 1364 (citation omitted); *see also, Craig v. Harney*, 331 U.S. 367, 370, 376-77, 67 S. Ct. 1249, 91 L. Ed. 1546 (1947) ("Judges are supposed to be men of fortitude, able to thrive in a hardy climate.... Judges who stand for reelection run on their records. That may be a rugged environment. Criticism is expected."); *Pennekamp v. Florida*, 328 U.S. 331, 336-40, 66 S. Ct. 1029, 90 L. Ed. 1295 (1946) (rejecting a "threat to the impartial and orderly administration of justice" as justification for a contempt order stemming from a political cartoon); *accord Richmond Newspapers, Inc. v. Virginia*, 448 U.S. 555, 100 S. Ct. 2814, 65 L. Ed. 2d 973 (1980) (holding that without good cause, criminal trials must be

open to the public); *Nebraska Press Ass'n v. Stuart*, 427 U.S. 539, 96 S. Ct. 2791, 49 L. Ed. 2d 683 (1976) (affirming principle of judicial transparency).

The First Amendment therefore forecloses the use of criminal or contempt sanctions to suppress criticism of the judiciary. The use of punishing civil and professional sanctions to accomplish the same end is equally offensive. I see little difference between truthful criticisms leveled at a judge by a newspaper editor or elected official on one hand, and a judicial candidate on the other.[11] I similarly see little difference between the use of the contempt power, and the use of a Supreme Court's ability to regulate bench and bar, to silence judicial criticism. Judges, elected or otherwise, are thought to be citizens of honor, integrity and fortitude. By holding office they subject themselves to public criticism.[12] *Monitor Patriot Co. v. Roy*, 401 U.S. 265, 274, 91 S. Ct. 621, 28 L. Ed. 2d 35 (1971). And as elected officers, this holds doubly so for Minnesota's judiciary. A judicial candidate has a right to criticize the opinions, philosophies, rulings and public statements of the incumbent, who has a

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[11] The court argues that Minnesota "seeks not to shield judges from published criticism, but to prevent them from deserving such criticism." *Ante* at 867 [206a] n. 14 (citations and quotations omitted). But the court's cure kills the patient. The worry, presumably, is that candidates will do or say things that pledge or seem to pledge them to certain outcomes in return for support, thus threatening judicial impartiality. The cure is to ensure that candidates can do nothing at all, thus destroying the election Canon 5 set out to save. Whether the court likes it or not, facing public criticism, whatever the source, comes with being a public official. Moreover, it is most certainly part of being a public candidate. This regulation flies in the face of both.

[12] Couching these prohibitions as necessary professional regulations falls similarly short, for the Supreme Court has repeatedly favored First Amendment expression over professional ethical regulations. *See Ohralik v. Ohio State Bar Ass'n*, 436 U.S. 447, 98 S. Ct. 1912, 56 L. Ed. 2d 444 (1978); *In re Primus*, 436 U.S. 412, 98 S. Ct. 1893, 56 L. Ed. 2d 417 (1978).

concomitant right to respond in kind. In sustaining Canon 5, the court permits precisely what these precedents say may not be done, except that rather than only protecting judges from the speech of others, they are apparently designed, according to the court, to protect incumbent judges and judicial candidates from the effects of their own speech. Such paternalistic notions have long been suspect, and are patently unconstitutional. Even granting the court's contention that Canon 5 will prevent some undesirable conduct, the vast majority of the speech and association suppressed will be legitimate, wholesome, democratic activity. Contrary to the court's assumption, judges, in this context, are not different. In the eyes of the First Amendment, they are the same.[6]

C.

I turn finally to the more mundane application of the Supreme Court's strict scrutiny jurisprudence. Even accepting that a restriction may serve a compelling state interest, in order to warrant the suppression of otherwise protected speech and association, it must be necessary to achieve its purpose. *Burson*, 504 U.S. at 198, 112 S. Ct. 1846. Despite the court's best efforts, Canon 5 fails this test.

Because a regulation that does not achieve its stated end cannot be necessary, the touchstone of necessity is effectiveness. *Eu*, 489 U.S. at 228-29, 109 S. Ct. 1013; *Tashjian*,

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[6] To bolster its "judges are different" argument, the court relies in part on *Cox v. Louisiana*, 379 U.S. 559, 85 S. Ct. 476, 13 L. Ed. 2d 487 (1965), where the Court reviewed a statute prohibiting the picketing of a courthouse with the intent to influence a judge, juror or court officer in the course of his duties. *Id.* at 560, 85 S. Ct. 476. The Court reversed the conviction on the grounds that an official had misrepresented to the defendant that his protesting was legal. *Id.* at 569-70, 85 S. Ct. 476. Despite this holding, the court engaged in a lengthy dictum discussing the statute itself. The statute, the Court observed, regulated only conduct, and did not infringe upon speech or assembly at all. *Id.* at 563, 85 S. Ct. 476.

479 U.S. at 214, 107 S. Ct. 544. For instance, in *Eu*, the state argued that its ban on political party endorsements of primary candidates served the compelling interest of protecting primary voters from confusion and undue influence. *Eu*, 489 U.S. at 228, 109 S. Ct. 1013. The Court doubted whether the restriction could achieve its stated rationale because of all the organizations with an interest in primary elections, the ban silenced only political parties. *Id.* at 228 n. 18, 109 S. Ct. 1013. Many other equally or more vocal groups remained free to endorse whomsoever they wished. Moreover, "the growing number of endorsements by political organizations using the labels 'Democratic' or 'Republican' has likely misled voters into believing that the official governing bodies were supporting the candidates." *Id.* As the restriction did not effect its goal, it was not necessary."

Canon 5 suffers from precisely this same flaw. It bars judicial candidates from attending or speaking at "political organization gatherings" or from seeking, accepting or using endorsements from a "political organization," and defines a "political organization" as a "political party organization." Canon 5 purports to safeguard a judge's ability to apply the law neutrally, to maintain the public confidence in judicial impartiality and to insulate judges from public

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" Ordinarily lawmakers may address problems piecemeal rather than having to propose all-encompassing solutions. Indeed, permitting "over-inclusiveness" and "under-inclusiveness" underpins basic rationality review. *See Williamson v. Lee Optical of Okla., Inc.*, 348 U.S. 483, 75 S. Ct. 461, 99 L. Ed. 563 (1955). Such is not the case regarding fundamental rights, however, where we enforce a much higher standard. *Playboy*, 120 S. Ct. at 1888. Here, failure to solve the entire asserted problem is fatal. *See, e.g., 44 Liquormart*, 517 U.S. 484, 116 S. Ct. 1495, 134 L. Ed. 2d 711 (Opinion of Stevens, J.); *Discovery Network*, 507 U.S. at 418, 113 S. Ct. 1505. Strict scrutiny imposes a much heavier burden on Canon 5 than on the "time, place and manner" restrictions reviewed in *Cornerstone Bible Church v. City of Hastings*, 948 F.2d 464, 470-71 (8th Cir. 1991).

pressure. Given its restricted application, however, Canon 5 simply cannot achieve these goals.

The court worries that by appearing at, speaking to or being endorsed by a political party, a candidate will appear "in hoc" thereto. As a general proposition, this is simply wrong. The Supreme Court recognized in *Eu* that one cannot conclude from such conduct that a candidate will necessarily tow a party line. 489 U.S. at 225 n. 15, 109 S. Ct. 1013. But even accepting the court's premise, Canon 5 falls far short of its goals because it fails to include candidate appearances before, speeches to, or endorsements by other politically active organizations. Candidates remain free to consort with organizations such as the National Organization of Women, the NAACP, the Christian Coalition, the National Association of Manufacturers, the AFL-CIO or the NRA. Many of these organizations are implicitly, and some explicitly, aligned with one or another of the major parties.[5] Candidates remain free to seek and use the endorsements of the insurance lobby, the Minnesota Trial Lawyers Association, or any other political or quasi-political organization not organized as a "political party." If the court's "appearance" concerns are valid, this ought to cause it grave anxiety.

The court argues that political parties are more likely to command a candidate's acquiescence to party positions on the bench. *Ante* at 872-73 [215a-217a], 876 [221a-222a]. Were this true, the court's argument would still fail because one does not satisfy the necessity requirement merely by solving for the greatest influence, but rather by addressing all significant influences. The court's assertion, however, is untrue. Of all the politically-oriented organizations around, the two major parties are both "big-tent" organizations—

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[5] Indeed, statistics from the 2000 election indicate that NAACP members voted for democratic candidates at a *higher* rate than did members of the democratic party.

ideologically consistent only in their aggregate distinctions one from another. Within each party a variety of opinions on most issues may be found. A candidate's appearance at a party function hardly indicates endorsement of its views. (I am certain that Republicans everywhere will be either delighted or dismayed to know that Ralph Nader's appearance at their national convention last fall signified his support for their platform. *See* Eun-Kyung Kim, *Nader Addresses Youth Convention*, *AP Online*, WL 24553132 (August 2, 2000).) A speech at a party function supports nothing beyond the candidate's own words, and an endorsement suggests only that the endorser finds a candidate more palatable than any other presently available.

On the other hand, quasi-political organizations, particularly those that focus on a single or only a few issues, are much more likely to demand and command a candidate's attention and support. The Federalist Society, for instance, is an organization dedicated to strict construction. Were it to endorse a candidate, it stands to reason that the candidate would be seen as a "strict constructionist." Abortion issue groups are among those most likely to endorse only candidates who will be thought to adh e strictly to the relevant "party line." Given their focus and intensity, such groups are much more capable than political parties of bringing their members' wrath to bear on elected officials including judges who stray from their point of view.

The record reflects the increasing role in and influence over judicial election politics exerted by these groups. Among those groups active in recent Minnesota judicial elections were state and local bar associations, the League of Women Voters, an organization called "People for Responsible Government," Minnesota Women Lawyers, Lavender Magazine and the Minnesota Family Council. Such groups can easily bring pressure to bear in judicial

elections.[46] Two 1996 examples from judicial elections in other states bear this out. In Nebraska, Supreme Court Judge David Lanphier was defeated in a retention vote after authoring an opinion striking down Nebraska's term limits law. His defeat, largely over the opinion, appears to have been engineered by a single-issue organization named "Citizens for Responsible Government." Similarly, Justice Penny White of the Tennessee Supreme Court was hounded out of office after voting with the majority to remand a death penalty case. The influence of such groups featured prominently in the testimony when the Minnesota Supreme Court held a hearing on whether to expand Canon 5 to exclude all such groups, rather than just political parties.

The court leaves single-issue political parties such as the Twin-Cities Area New Party, which brought the suit in *Timmons*, entirely out in the cold. Many smaller parties including the Right to Life Party, the Natural Law Party, and until this recent election cycle, the Green Party, tend to focus on only a few key issues. These groups are distinguished from advocacy groups only by having exercised their right to organize as a political party. Under the court's opinion, having done so will cost them their rights to engage in election-related speech and association.

If the Minnesota Supreme Court is truly worried about the appearance of or actual judicial bias, it ought to be concerned with more than political parties. By ignoring other political groups, Canon 5 leaves unregulated sources of funding, endorsements and pressures, which, if the court's

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[46] During the 2000 campaign, two Supreme Court justices received between eight and fifteen percent of their total contributions from one plaintiff's law firm, which had previously been accused of attempting to buy elections with tobacco settlement money. Candidate Filings, Minnesota Board of Campaign Finance & Public Disclosure (2000). Canon 5 does not solve electoral problems, but merely selectively sweeps them under the rug.

concerns about judicial partiality are justified, do much more to undermine public perception than political parties. In fact, barring political party involvement will most likely make the system less tenable. By removing the only organizations that endorse candidates across a spectrum of issues, voters are left with only the shrill voice of narrow advocacy coming from special interest groups. Because the canons do not achieve their stated goals, they cannot be considered necessary, and therefore cannot pass strict scrutiny.

D.

Not only must a restriction on speech be necessary, it must also be narrowly tailored to use the least restrictive means in achieving its stated goal. *Burson*, 504 U.S. at 198, 112 S. Ct. 1846. In doing so, a restriction must suppress as little protected activity as possible. "If a less restrictive alternative would serve the Government's purpose, the [state] must use that alternative." *Playboy*, 120 S. Ct. at 1886. Canon 5 runs rampant through acres of protected speech, and in doing so eschews many less restrictive options.

If the court's goals do accurately reflect the actual interests of the people of Minnesota, they could be most efficiently and effectively achieved by amending the Minnesota Constitution to allow for the appointment, rather than the election of judges. This would achieve the court's interests in one stroke, without requiring the suppression of a single protected word. In undertaking its "narrowly tailored" analysis, the court does not discuss this option. Of course, doing so would reopen for the court the sticky problem of Minnesota's having repeatedly expressed a preference for elected judges.

Compliance with the First Amendment does not require so radical a change, for other states have successfully adopted a variety of mechanisms to insulate their judges from the pressures of elected office without impermissibly

trenching on protected constitutional rights. Various states, including Nebraska and Tennessee, have adopted the Missouri Plan, discussed in Section I, whereby initially-appointed judges stand in periodic retention elections. Other states have used a more piecemeal approach, remedying specific problems. Some, for instance, alleviate the financial pressures faced by judges for whom the bench provides a livelihood by lengthening terms of office or by providing generous pensions in order to ease the transition back to private practice. Of course, Minnesota's failure to adopt any such scheme does not license the Minnesota Supreme Court to impose on judges and their putative supporters ethical canons abusive to their First Amendment rights.

III.

In sum, the court starts with a series of premises, many of which I accept. The Supreme Court of Minnesota has every right to regulate the state's bench and bar. It may protect its judiciary against both actual and the appearance of partiality. It may adopt measures tempered to do so in the ordinary course of its judiciary's conduct. However, that principle of judicial independence, as has been recognized by almost every court to take up the question, must give way before rights which, unlike the court's policy, have been constitutionally secured. Judges, whatever their differences from other officials, have no more right than others to avoid the rigors of public debate and public elections. No matter what the wisdom of placing the judiciary beyond the rigors of such activities, and no matter what selection method we as federal judges may prefer, the people of Minnesota have adopted an elective judiciary—a system which under our Constitution, must come replete with speech and associational rights.

Because the court finds compelling an interest that is not shared by the people of Minnesota, trumps well established speech and associational rights with values not adopted by

the citizens of the state, permits the erection of an unconstitutional self-insulating barrier between the judiciary and the public, and permits regulations that are neither necessary nor narrowly tailored, I must respectfully dissent.

APPENDIX H

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT, D. MINNESOTA

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; INDIAN ASIAN AMERICAN REPUBLICANS OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; REPUBLICAN SENIORS, AN ASSOCIATION; YOUNG REPUBLICAN LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA, A MINNESOTA NONPROFIT CORPORATION; MINNESOTA COLLEGE REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION; GREGORY F. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; CHERYL L. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; MARK E. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; CORWIN C. HULBERT, INDIVIDUALLY; CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE, AN ASSOCIATION; MINNESOTA AFRICAN AMERICAN REPUBLICAN COUNCIL, AN ASSOCIATION; MUSLIM REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION; MICHAEL MAXIM, INDIVIDUALLY; AND KEVIN J. KOLOSKY, INDIVIDUALLY,

PLAINTIFFS,

V.

VERNA KELLY, IN HER CAPACITY AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE MINNESOTA BOARD OF JUDICIAL STANDARDS, OR HER SUCCESSOR, CHARLES E. LUNDBERG, IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIR OF THE MINNESOTA LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BOARD, OR HIS SUCCESSOR; AND EDWARD J. CLEARY, IN HIS CAPACITY AS DIRECTOR OF THE MINNESOTA OFFICE OF LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, OR HIS SUCCESSOR,

DEFENDANTS.

No. 98-831 MJD

Sept. 13, 1999

AMENDED MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER

DAVIS, District Judge.

In this action, Plaintiffs seek declaratory and injunctive relief, enjoining the Minnesota Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board ("Lawyers Board"), the Minnesota Office of Lawyers Responsibility ("Office of Professional Responsibility") and the Minnesota Board of Judicial Standards ("Judicial Board") from enforcing sections of Canon 5 of the Code of Judicial Conduct (the "Judicial Codes"), which prohibits judicial candidates from engaging in certain conduct during judicial campaigns, on the basis that such prohibitions unconstitutionally infringe upon their rights of free speech, free association and equal protection guaranteed under the United States and Minnesota Constitutions. Plaintiffs also seek an award of reasonable attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1988.

Background

1. The Parties

Plaintiff Gregory F. Wersal ("Wersal") is an attorney licensed to practice law within the state of Minnesota. Complaint ¶ 6. In 1996 and 1998, he was a judicial candidate for the position of Associate Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court. *Id.* Wersal's campaign committee, Campaign for Justice, his wife, Cheryl L. Wersal, and brother, Mark Wersal are also named plaintiffs. *Id.* ¶¶ 7, 8 and 10. Plaintiff Corwin C. Hulbert is an unsolicited advocate of Wersal and his endorsement by the Republican Party and its Affiliated Associations. *Id.* ¶ 9. Finally, the Republican Party of Minnesota, together with its Affiliated Associations and their respective members, including Michael Maxim, are named plaintiffs (hereinafter referred to as the "Third Party Plaintiffs"). *Id.* ¶¶ 4 and 5.

The named defendants in this case are the Chair of the Lawyers Board, the Director of the Office of Professional

Responsibility and the Chair of the Judicial Board. The Lawyers Board has general supervisory authority over the administration of the Office of Professional Responsibility and the Rules of Professional Responsibility and may issue opinions on questions of professional conduct. Rules on Lawyers Professional Responsibility, 4(c). The Director of the Office of Professional Responsibility and his office are the staff component of the Lawyers Board, whose function is to investigate and prosecute complaints against lawyers. Rules on Lawyers Professional Responsibility 6(a) and 8(a). Following an investigation, the Director determines whether or not discipline is warranted, and the type of discipline that is warranted. *Id.* Rules 8(d), 9(a) and 12(a). The Judicial Board has jurisdiction to receive complaints, investigate, conduct hearings and make recommendations to the Minnesota Supreme Court concerning judges alleged to have violated the Codes of Judicial Conduct. Rules of Board on Judicial Standards, 2(a).

2. The Judicial Codes

Judicial codes regulating the conduct of judicial candidates in judicial elections have been existence in Minnesota since at least 1950. Defendants' Lungberg and Cleary, Exs. 19 and 20. In the earlier version of the Judicial Codes, the Canons of Judicial Ethics, judicial candidates were instructed not to engage in making political speeches or from soliciting contributions or endorsements from political parties, because "it is inevitable that suspicion of being warped by political bias will attach to a judge who becomes an active promoter of the interests of one political party as against another." *Id.*, Canon 28, Ex. 20, p. 53. A judicial candidate was also instructed not to "announce in advance his conclusions of law on disputed issues". *Id.*, Canon 30. p. 54.

The Judicial Codes did become more specific over time. For example, the Codes of Judicial Conduct adopted in 1974 prohibited judicial candidates from the following: making speeches for a political organization, Canon 7(A)(1)(b)

(1993), soliciting funds or making contributions to political organizations, or attending political gatherings, Canon 7(A)(1)(c), or engage in any other political activity except on behalf of measures to improve the law, the legal system, judicial administration or the administration of justice. Canon 7(A)(4). This set of Canons did allow a judicial candidate to "attend and speak on his or her own behalf at other than partisan political gatherings during the year in which the judge is a candidate for election or reelection." Canon 7(A)(2). Judicial candidates were also directed to maintain the dignity appropriate to judicial office and should encourage family, and employees or public officials subject to the candidate's control from doing what the candidate could not do. Canon 7(B)(1)(a) and (b) (1993). Also, judicial candidates were directed not to make pledges or to "announce his or her views on disputed legal or political issues". Canon 7(B)(c) (1993).

In 1995, the Judicial Codes addressing the regulation of judicial candidates were amended and are now addressed in Canon 5. Canon 5 was again amended on December 23, 1997, by adding language to clarify ambiguities that resulted from the 1995 amendments.[1] The Sections of Canon 5 relevant to this case, in its present form, are provided below, with the December 1997 amendments underscored:

A. In General.

Each justice of the supreme court and each court of appeals and district court judge is deemed to hold a separate nonpartisan office. MS 2048.06, Subd. 6.

(1) Except as authorized in Section 5B(1), a judge or a candidate for election to judicial office shall not:

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[1] For example, the 1995 Judicial Codes prohibited a judicial candidate from attending political gatherings in Canon 5 A(1)(d), while Canon 5 B(1) allowed the judicial candidate to speak to gatherings on his/her own behalf. Ex. J to Wersal Aff.

(a) act as a leader or hold any office in a political organization; *identify themselves as members of a political organization; except as necessary to vote in an election*;

(b) publicly endorse or, except for the judge or candidate's opponent, publicly oppose another candidate for public office;

(c) make speeches on behalf of a political organization;

(d) attend political gatherings; *or seek, accept or use endorsements from a political organization*; or

(e) solicit funds for or pay an assessment to or make a contribution to a political organization or candidate, or purchase tickets for political party dinners or other functions.

* * * * * *

(3) A candidate for a judicial office, including an incumbent judge:

(a) shall maintain the dignity appropriate to judicial office and act in a manner consistent with the integrity and independence of the judiciary, and shall encourage family members to adhere to the same standards of political conduct in support of the candidate as apply to the candidate;

(b) shall prohibit employees who serve at the pleasure of the candidate, and shall discourage other employees and officials subject to the candidate's direction and control from doing on the candidate's behalf what the candidate is prohibited from doing under the Sections of this Canon;

(c) except as otherwise permitted by Section 5B(2), shall not authorize or knowingly permit any other person to do for the candidate what the candidate is prohibited from doing under the Sections of this Canon;

(d) shall not:

(1) make pledges or promises of conduct in office other than the faithful and impartial performance of the duties of the office; announce his or her views on disputed legal or political issues; or misrepresent his or her identity, qualifications, present position or other fact, or those of the opponent;

* * * * * *

B. (1) A judge or a candidate for election to judicial office may, except as prohibited by law,

(a) speak to gatherings, *other than political organization gatherings*, on his or her own behalf;

* * * * * *

(2) A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions or solicit publicly stated support. A candidate may, however, establish committees to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting campaign contributions and public support from lawyers, *but shall not seek, accept or use political organization endorsements.* Such committees shall not disclose to the candidate the identity of campaign contributors *nor shall the committee disclose to the candidate the identity of those who were solicited for contribution or stated public support and refused such solicitation.* A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefits of the candidate or others.

* * * * * *

D. *Political Organization. For purposes of Canon 5 the term political organization denotes a political party organization.*

* * * * * *

3. Background

Plaintiffs state that during Wersal's 1996 campaign, the Campaign for Justice, as well as Wersal's wife, brother and members of the Republican Party or an Affiliated Association, engaged or participated in one or more of the following types of speech or association on Wersal's behalf: attended gatherings of the Republican party and its affiliated associations and distributed campaign literature and spoke at such gatherings; announced that Wersal was in favor of a strict construction of the Constitution and was critical of certain decisions of the Minnesota Supreme Court; identified Wersal as a member of the Republican party; sought the Republican party's endorsement for Wersal; and solicited campaign contributions. *Id.* ¶¶ 14, 15 and 46. As a result of such conduct, an individual filed a complaint with the Office of Professional Responsibility against Wersal, alleging violations of Canon 5 of the Judicial Codes. Complaint ¶ 15, Ex. C to Wersal Affidavit. The complainant was concerned with Wersal's attendance and speech at the Republican Congressional District Convention and of his seeking partisan support for his campaign. The complainant also noted concern that Wersal was addressing issues which may come before the court to which he sought election. *Id.*

The complaint was investigated and dismissed for three reasons. First, as to Wersal's attendance at a political gathering, the Director of the Office of Professional Responsibility determined that the Canons in force at that time were ambiguous, as one Canon prohibited attendance at political gatherings while another allowed speech at a "gathering." Because of the ambiguity, the Director

doubted that she could establish that attendance at a political gathering by a judicial candidate was prohibited. *Id.*, ¶ 17, Ex. D. With respect to seeking political endorsements, the Director determined that Wersal is only prohibited from personally seeking endorsements, and that Wersal did not engage in this type of conduct. *Id.* As to the issue of announcing views on disputed legal or political issues, the Director stated:

> The current prohibition contained in Minnesota Canon 5A3(d)(i) is identical to Canon 7B(1)(c) of the prior ABA Code of Judicial Conduct (1972 version). The parallel provision of current ABA Model Code of Judicial Conduct (1990 version) does not contain a blanket prohibition against announcing views on disputed issues. Instead, the current ABA provision prohibits "statements that commit or appear to commit the candidate with respect to cases, controversies or issues that are likely to come before the court." The ABA adopted the 1990 version out of concern over the constitutionality of the 1972 version. Although adoption of the 1990 version was proposed to the Minnesota Supreme Court in June 1994 by the Minnesota Advisory Committee to review the American Bar Association Model Code of Judicial Conduct, it was not adopted by the Minnesota Supreme Court.
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> * * * * * *
>
> The Director's Office had doubts about the constitutionality of the current Minnesota Canon and its application to respondent's statements. In addition the Director doubts she would be able to prove by clear and convincing evidence that the statements in respondent's campaign materials constitute an announcement of his views on the issues of crime, welfare or abortion, let alone that they appear to

commit respondent with respect to any of these three issues. For these reasons the Director has determined that discipline is not warranted.

Ex. D. to Wersal Aff.

Even though the complaint was dismissed, Wersal asserts that he withdrew his candidacy for Associate Justice as a result of the Complaint, fearing that further Complaints would be filed against him, jeopardizing his ability to practice law. *Id.* ¶ 20.

In January 1997, Wersal announced his intention to once again run for the office of Associate Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court in the primary and general election of 1998. *Id.* ¶ 21. However, as a result of amendments to Canon 5 of the Judicial Codes that took effect in 1997, Plaintiffs allege that Wersal and others acting on his behalf were no longer able to attend and speak at gatherings of political organizations, were not able to identify Wersal as a member of the Republican Party, were not allowed to discuss Wersal's views on many disputed legal and political issues, and were prevented from soliciting contributions from political parties and from seeking, accepting or using a political party endorsement. *Id.* ¶ 27-29.

Plaintiffs allege that as a result of Canon 5's prohibitions, Wersal was not endorsed by the Republican Party or any of its Affiliated Associations and because he was not allowed to attend or speak at its political gatherings, the Third Party Plaintiffs were not given the opportunity to hear of Wersal's views on disputed issues. The Third Party Plaintiffs allege that the prohibitions contained in Canon 5, as applied to them, adversely affected its members because they were denied the necessary information about Wersal to allow them to make an informed decision at the voting booth.

In February 1998, Wersal sought an advisory opinion from the Office of Professional Responsibility as to whether the Office intended to enforce the prohibitions against judi-

cial candidates: 1) speaking on their own behalf to political party organization gatherings; 2) seeking, accepting or using endorsements from a political party organization; and 3) announcing his or her views on disputed legal issues. *Id.*, ¶ 33. The Office of Professional Responsibility responded in the affirmative to the first two questions, but declined to answer the third on the basis that Wersal had failed to specify what statements he would make that may or may not be a view on a disputed legal or political issue. The Director reiterated his concern, however, that the announce clause was not constitutional as written. Ex. W to Wersal Aff.

In their Complaint, Plaintiffs have asserted five separate claims. In Count One, Plaintiffs allege that Canons 5 A(1) and B(1), which prohibits judicial candidates, their families and others acting on the candidate's behalf, from attending and speaking at political gatherings, infringes upon their rights to freedom of speech and association as guaranteed them under the United States and Minnesota Constitutions. Complaint ¶ 35. Plaintiffs also allege that this prohibition violates the equal protection clauses of the United States and Minnesota Constitutions, as the Judicial Codes' definition of political organization affects political organizations such as the Republican Party, but no "special interest" organizations such as political action committees, the Minnesota Trial Lawyers Association or MADD. *Id.* ¶ 40. In Count II, Plaintiffs allege that the ban on judicial candidates from announcing their views on disputed legal or political issues contained in Canon 5 A(3), violates the individual plaintiffs' freedom of speech. *Id.* ¶¶ 42 and 61. Counts III and IV assert claims involving the violation of the rights of freedom of speech, freedom of association and equal protection, as a result of the Judicial Codes ban on judicial candidates identifying their political party contained in Canon 5 A(1), and the ban on seeking, accepting or using political party endorsements contained in Canon 5 A(1) and B(2). *Id.* ¶¶ 62 and 79. Finally, in Count V,

Plaintiffs assert Canon 5 B(2)'s ban on judicial candidates personally soliciting campaign contributions is a violation of the right to freedom of speech. *Id.* ¶ 102.

Plaintiffs moved for a temporary restraining order to enjoin the enforcement of Canon 5 prior to the precinct caucuses on March 3, 1998. The motion was denied. On November 2, 1998, the Eighth Circuit affirmed this Court's decision to deny the TRO, but expressed no opinion on the merits of Plaintiffs' claims. *Republican Party of Minnesota v. Kelly*, 163 F.3d 602, 1998 WL 764782 (8th Cir. 1998).

Currently before the Court are cross motions for summary judgment.

Standards for Summary Judgment

Summary judgment is appropriate if there is no genuine issue of material fact and a party is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. Fed.R.Civ.P. 56(c); *Celotex Corp. v. Catrett*, 477 U.S. 317, 106 S.Ct. 2548, 91 L. Ed. 2d 265 (1986); *Unigroup, Inc. v. O'Rourke Storage & Transfer Co.*, 980 F.2d 1217, 1219-20 (8th Cir. 1992).

In order to prevail against the claims asserted in the Complaint, the Defendants must establish that the relevant sections of Canon 5 of the Judicial Codes are narrowly tailored to serve a compelling state interest. *Stretton v. Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania*, 944 F.2d 137, 141-142 (3rd Cir. 1991).[2]

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[2] The Defendants assert that other standards may be applicable to the constitutional challenges presented by Plaintiffs in their Complaint. For purposes of the current motions before the Court, however, the Defendants will not dispute the applicability of the strict scrutiny analysis.

Analysis

I. Bans on Political Activity

A. Compelling State Interest

At issue in this case is the conflict of two principles, the roots of which "lie deep in our constitutional heritage." *Buckley v. Illinois Judicial Inquiry Board*, 997 F.2d 224, 227 (7th Cir. 1993). One is the freedom of candidates to express their views on all matters of interest to the electorate. *Id.* The other, is that "[j]udges should decide cases in accordance with the law rather than with any express or implied commitments that they may have made to their campaign supporters or others." *Id.*

The Defendants herein assert that those provisions of Canon 5 that prohibit a candidate from: 1) attending and/or speaking at gatherings of political parties, 2) identifying himself/herself as a member of a political party, and 3) seeking, accepting or using an endorsement from a political party were enacted because of the long recognized principle that politics can interfere with the actual and apparent integrity and independence of the judiciary. Defendants further assert that the bans on political activity by a judicial candidate are narrowly tailored to serve several compelling state interests: preventing bias or the appearance of bias in favor of the judge's political party or against members of a rival party; preventing bias or the appearance of bias in judge's decisions of particular cases that involve party positions; promoting judicial independence by helping to ensure judges owe their jobs to no one but the general electorate. Defendants assert Canon 5 serves to accomplish these goals by regulating the conduct of the judicial candidate, and those under his or her control while preserving the freedom of the general electorate, including political parties, to seek information necessary to make an informed choice at the voting booth.

Plaintiffs argue that by choosing to elect judges, the state of Minnesota "does not have an independent judiciary." Plaintiff Wersal's Memorandum in Support of Motion for Summary Judgment, p. 2. Plaintiffs further argue that there are no facts to support the Defendants' assertion that political influences have a negative effect on the independence of the judiciary. The Court rejects both of these assertions. Plaintiffs have failed to put forth any authority for its assertion that by choosing to elect judges, the state has no interest in restricting the influences of partisan politics on judicial candidates. As aptly noted by the Third Circuit Court of Appeals: "The fact that a state chooses to select its judges by popular election, while perhaps a decision of questionable wisdom, does not signify the abandonment of the ideal of an impartial judiciary carrying out its duties fairly and thoroughly." *Stretton*, 944 F.2d at 142. Furthermore, there is sufficient evidence to support the finding that the influences of the political parties have a negative effect on the independence of the judiciary.

Although the framers of Minnesota's constitution adopted the process of judicial selection through popular election, the historical record does not suggest that in doing so, the state disregarded the notion of judicial independence in favor of the political process. In fact, in its summary of the history of Minnesota's system for selecting judges, the Minnesota Supreme Court wrote that the system eventually adopted by the framers of Minnesota's Constitution recognized the necessity of maintaining an independent judiciary. *Peterson v. R.H. Stafford*, 490 N.W.2d 418, 420 (Minn. 1992) *cert. denied*, 507 U.S. 1033, 113 S.Ct. 1852, 123 L. Ed. 2d 475 (1993).

> The methods by which the federal system and other states initially select and then elect or retain judges are varied, yet the explicit or implicit goal of the constitutional provisions and enabling legislation is the same: to create and maintain an independent

> judiciary as free from political, economic and social pressure as possible so judges can decide cases without those influences. That that goal guided the framers of the federal Constitution to grant life tenure to judges is evidenced by the writings of Alexander Hamilton which expressed concern that life tenure would provide judges sufficient security to allow them to rule with their consciences and according to the Constitution, rather than to bow to political notions. While the framers of our state constitution have developed a system of selection and election quite different from that federal scheme, they too designed a plan to recognize the uniqueness and independence of the state judiciary.

Id. Initially, the framers attempted to distinguish judicial elections by providing judges with seven year terms so that judicial elections would not occur at the same time as elections for other elective office. *Id.* It wasn't until judicial terms were thereafter reduced to six years that "the difficulties associated with partisan [judicial] elections became more evident." *Id.*

One clear example of the influence of political parties upon judicial elections occurred when "at the election of 1898, judicial offices had been dragged into politics." 1 History of the Bench and Bar of Minnesota 66 (1904). Justice William Mitchell was first appointed to the Minnesota Supreme Court in 1881. At the succeeding election, he was nominated by the democratic and republican party. *Id.* "By the same non-partisan unanimity he was re-elected in 1886 and again in 1892." *Id.* During the election of 1898, however, Justice Mitchell was not nominated by the republican party "and at the election which followed, Minnesota lost its greatest judge."[3] *Id.*

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[3] That Justice Mitchell was a great jurist, respected throughout the country as well as in Minnesota, is illustrated by a letter written by a

To counter the conflicts that had arisen and the potential conflicts that could arise "between the demands of an election process and the judicial impartiality required to decide cases free from political maneuvering", legislation was passed providing for judicial elections to be nonpartisan in 1912. *Peterson* 490 N.W.2d at 422. After judicial elections became nonpartisan, however, the concern remained that political influence would nonetheless infiltrate the judicial election process. For example, in *Moon v.*

Harvard Law Professor to a friend in Minnesota. In the letter, Professor Thayer wrote:

> I am astonished that there is doubt of the re-election of Judge Mitchell to your supreme court. I wish the people of Minnesota knew the estimate that is put upon him in other parts of the country, and there could be no doubt about it then . . . I have long recognized Judge Mitchell as one of the best judges in this country, and have come to know also the opinion held of him by lawyers competent to pass on an opinion on such a question . . . Pray do not allow your state to lose the services of such a man. To keep him on the bench is a service not merely to Minnesota, but to the whole country and to the law. Your state it is that is now on trial before the country. The question is: Can Minnesota appreciate such a man? Is it worthy to have him? I am not going to believe that a state which can command the services of one of the few judges in the country that stand out among their fellows as pre-eminent, that give it distinction, will refuse to accept these services. You lawyers of Minnesota must not let party politics work any such result.

1 History of the Bench and Bar of Minnesota, 71.

Justice Mitchell is also the namesake of the William Mitchell College of Law, whose distinguished alumni include The Honorable Warren E. Berger '31, Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, 1969-1986, The Honorable Douglas K. Amdahl '51, Chief Justice, Minnesota Supreme Court, 1980-1988, The Honorable Rosalie E. Wahl '67, Associate Justice, Minnesota Supreme Court, 1977-1994, and the Honorable Paul A. Magnuson '63, Chief Judge, United States District Court, District of Minnesota.

Halverson, 206 Minn. 331, 288 N.W. 579 (1939), the court was asked to interpret the Minnesota statute[1] that provided that the office of chief justice and associate justice of the Supreme Court and all elective county offices would be non-partisan. Specifically at issue in that case was whether an individual running for the office of the register of deeds could solicit political party support without violating § 294. Although judicial elections were not specifically at issue in *Moon*, Justice Loring nonetheless took the opportunity to submit a concurring opinion to voice his concern regarding political party endorsements of judicial candidates.

> When candidates for such offices were placed on a non-partisan ballot it was, it seems to me, the purpose of the legislature to lift the judgeships above sordid political influence and to free the candidates from obligation to a political party so that if elected they might render judicial instead of partisan political decisions on matters where party programs, party interests or even prominent party leaders might be involved. *The abuse and accusations of party treason which have been heaped upon some judges in the recent past because of decisions thought to be contrary to the interests of an indorsing [sic] party ought to be evidence enough of the impropriety of party indorsements [sic] and of their purpose to induce partisan political rather than impartial judicial decisions.* Judges are or should be elected to interpret the law as they find it without fear or favor. It poisons the very fount of democracy if they do not do so. Nothing so shakes the confidence of the people in their courts and arouses contempt for their government, as politically minded judges. There can be no propriety in any influence which tends, consciously or otherwise, to prevent impartiality or which tends to

[1] 1 Mason Minn. St. 1927 § 294.

> create a feeling of party obligation. If the statutes or the constitution, as interpreted by courts, do not suit the people the proper remedy lies in the legislature or by amendment to the constitution, not in judicial misinterpretation.

Id., 288 N.W.2d at 581-582 (emphasis added). The inherent tension in the judicial election process was again recognized in the 1972 Constitutional Study Commission, Judicial Branch Committee Report, which recognized that "qualified lawyers may not seek judicial appointment for fear they will give up their practice only to be defeated by a politician with a popular name" and that the "public finds it distasteful for judges to become embroiled in politics." *Peterson*, 490 N.W.2d at 422-423.[5]

In determining whether the state has a compelling interest in maintaining the actual and apparent independence of the judiciary, the Court must keep in mind the functions of the judiciary, compared to those of the executive and legislative systems.

> The functioning of the judicial system differs markedly from those of the executive and legislative. In those areas, the public has the right to know the details of the programs that candidates propose to enact into law and administer. Pledges to follow certain paths are not only expected, but are desirable so that

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[5] This Court is also mindful of numerous examples in other states, in which judicial elections were influenced by partisan politics. *See e.g., Geary v. Renne*, 911 F.2d 280, 309-314 (9th Cir. 1990) (J. Alarcon dissenting) *vacated and remanded Renne v. Geary*, 501 U.S. 312, 111 S.Ct. 2331, 115 L. Ed. 2d 288 (1991) (discussing the effect that California's political parties had on the integrity and independence of the judiciary and local office holders); Penny J. White, *Judicial Independence: Second Steps*, 38 JUDGES' JOURNAL No. 3, ¶ 5-8 (Summer 1999) (discussing the effect that single issue, negative political maneuvering had on authors' retention election to the Tennessee Supreme Court, as well as other examples).

> voters may make a choice between proposed agendas that affect the public. By contrast, the judicial system is based on the concept of individualized decisions on challenged conduct and interpretations of law enacted by the other branches of government.

Stretton, 944 F.2d at 142. *See also, Buckley*, 997 F.2d at 228 ("judges remain different from legislators and executive officials, even when all are elected, in ways that bear on the strength of the state's interest in restricting their freedom of speech.") It is these very differences that have been the basis for finding that the state has a compelling interest in imposing restrictions in judicial campaigns. *See e.g., Morial v. Judiciary Comm'n of Louisiana*, 565 F.2d 295, 302 (5th Cir. 1977) *cert. denied*, 435 U.S. 1013, 98 S.Ct. 1887, 56 L. Ed. 2d 395 (1978); *Ackerson v. Kentucky Judicial Retirement and Removal Comm.*, 776 F. Supp. 309 (W.D. Ky. 1991). "An evenhanded, unbiased and impartial judiciary is one of the pillars upon which our system of government rests. To the degree appropriate, the conduct of judicial elections ... may be regulated so as to meet that interest, even if freedom of speech is thereby constrained." *Ackerson*, 776 F. Supp. at 313. *See also, Haffey v. Taft*, 803 F. Supp. 121, 125 (S.D. Ohio 1992) (in upholding state statute that prohibited the identification of judicial candidate's political affiliation on general ballot, court recognized that the state has a significant interest in keeping politics out of judicial elections.)

The United States Supreme Court has recognized, in the context of federal and state employees, that partisan political activities must be limited in order to ensure meritorious performance. *U.S. Civil Service Comm'n v. Nat'l Ass'n of Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. 548, 93 S.Ct. 2880, 37 L. Ed. 2d 796 (1973) (upholding Hatch Act restrictions on federal employees); *Broadrick v. Oklahoma*, 413 U.S. 601, 93 S.Ct. 2908, 37 L. Ed. 2d 830 (1973) (upholding state

statute imposing restrictions on state employees in political party activities).

> Such decision on our part would no more than confirm the judgment of history, a judgment made by this country over the last century that it is in the best interest of the country, indeed essential, that federal service should depend upon meritorious performance rather than political service, and that the political influence of federal employees on others and on the electoral process should be limited.

Letter Carriers, 413 U.S. at 557, 93 S.Ct. 2880. The Court held that not only was it important that the Government and its employees in fact avoid practicing political justice, it was also "critical that they appear to the public to be avoiding it, if confidence in the system of representative Government is not to be eroded to a disastrous extent." *Letter Carriers*, at 565, 93 S.Ct. 2880.

Applying this rationale to the judicial candidate, the court in *Morial* noted "[t]he government has at least as great an interest in assuring the impartiality of judicial administration of the laws as in assuring the impartiality of bureaucratic administration of the laws." *Id.*, 565 F.2d at 302. The Court in *Letter Carriers* and *Broadrick*, as well as the court in *Morial*, recognized the essential role political parties play in the electoral process, but at the same time recognized that political influence, or the appearance thereof, is simply not compatible with the administration and interpretation of the law.

In support of their position that the state has no compelling interest in preserving an independent judiciary by restricting political activities of the judicial candidate and his/her supporters, Plaintiffs rely on a line of cases that addressed the constitutionality of a California Election Code and a California constitutional provision that banned political party endorsements at primaries and banned poli-

tical parties from endorsing, supporting or opposing a candidate for nonpartisan office. *Eu v. San Francisco County Dem. Central Comm.*, 489 U.S. 214, 109 S.Ct. 1013, 103 L. Ed. 2d 271 (1989); *Renne v. Geary*, 501 U.S. 312, 111 S.Ct. 2331, 115 L. Ed. 2d 288 (1991); *California Democratic Party v. Lungren*, 919 F. Supp. 1397 (N.D. Cal. 1996).

In *Eu*, the United States Supreme Court held that a ban on political parties' right to endorse candidates at primaries burdened their rights to free speech and free association, and that the ban could survive constitutional challenge only if such ban served a compelling state interest. The state had argued that the ban served to stabilize government and to protect voters from confusion and undue influence. The Court found, however, that the state had not shown how the ban served these asserted interests. 489 U.S. at 229, 109 S.Ct. 1013. Similarly, in *Lungren*, the district court struck down a state constitutional prohibition of party endorsements of candidates for non-partisan office. In doing so, the court rejected the state's assertion that it had a compelling state interest in preventing voters from being unduly influenced by political party endorsements. *Lungren*, 919 F. Supp. at 1402 (citation omitted).

Eu and its progeny are not controlling here, however, as the bans at issue in this case focus on the conduct of the judicial candidate, while the *Eu* line of cases address bans that restricted the conduct and speech of political parties and its members. This distinction is crucial and was pointed out by the court in *Lungren*.

> The court will assume arguendo that California has a compeiling interest in preventing nonpartisan officeholders from engaging in conduct that tends to undermine the nonpartisan nature of their posts. Even so, Section 6(b) misses the mark. The evil sought to be combated is the unseemly partisanship of nonpartisan officers once they are in office, not the partisanship of political parties (which, of course, is the very nature of

> political parties). Section 6(b) purports to prevent officeholders from being "beholden" to political parties by imposing a ban on the parties' speech about candidates for office, rather than (as the Supreme Court approved in Letter Carriers) a ban on the partisan political conduct of the officeholders themselves. *This distinction is crucial.* The government has an interest in the manner in which its elected officials conduct themselves while in office. The government does not and cannot have a legitimate interest in silencing the speech of third parties about the qualifications and political views of candidates for those offices.

919 F. Supp. at 1402 (emphasis added). The court went on to note that "California can, of course, prohibit judges from engaging in partisan political activity once they are in office." *Id.* at 1405 (citing *Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. at 564-65, 93 S.Ct. 2880.) Clearly, if judges are prohibited from engaging in political activity once in office, then judges that are seeking reelection are similarly prohibited from such activity. I[t] stands to reason, then, that in order to prevent a lawyer candidate from gaining an unfair advantage during an election by garnering the support of a political party, lawyer candidates should also be prevented from engaging in political activity during the election.

The Third Party Plaintiffs argue that Canon 5 as applied to them, does, in fact, infringe on their rights of free speech, free association and of their right to receive information. Thus, *Eu* and its progeny are directly applicable to the issue of whether the state has a compelling interest sufficient to withstand scrutiny. In support of their argument, the Third Party Plaintiffs have submitted twenty examples of how their rights to freedom of speech, association and the right to receive information were infringed by Canon 5. For example, the Third Party Plaintiffs identify a number of its members that did not receive or transmit any information about Wersal or other judicial candidates at

Republican Party conventions because of Canon 5. *See generally*, Response Memorandum of Republican Party, ¶ .5-10. Because of these restrictions, the Third Party Plaintiffs argue that it was unable to endorse Wersal for the position of Associate Justice.

This argument is without merit. Nothing in Canon 5 prohibits political parties from endorsing judicial candidates, or from accessing information on a judicial candidate in order to allow them to make an informed choice at the voting booth. The fact that attendees at political gatherings prior to the elections in 1998 misunderstood Canon 5 and its proscriptions does not alter the reality that the Canons do not prevent political parties or its members from seeking information on judicial candidates. While such information is not available at party conventions from the candidate, there exists alternative means to access information on judicial candidates. For example, candidates are not prohibited from communicating to the voters through the media, literature or on a door-to-door basis.

Finally, Plaintiffs argue that the state has produced no facts to support its assertions that the state has a compelling interest in maintaining an independent judiciary and that restricting political activity by judicial candidates narrowly serves that interest, relying only on conclusory statements. A similar argument was rejected in *Kirchgessner v. Wilentz*, 884 F. Supp. 901 (D.N.J. 1995). In *Kirchgessner*, the district court held that a New Jersey Supreme Court policy that prohibited probation officers from becoming affiliated with law enforcement organizations did not violate the probation officers' rights of freedom of association. In so finding, the court held that probation officers, as employees of the judicial branch of government, must be perceived as free from outside influences, and that membership in law enforcement associations would harm that perception. 884 F. Supp. at 913. Plaintiffs in that case had argued that

there was no evidentiary support for the court's finding. The court responded to this concern by noting:

> [T]he only way you could have empirical data is when partiality is developed, when conflict is developed and at that point it is too late, the system is brought down under its own weight . . . there can[not] be any basis, other than for theory unless the system went so awry, unless the system was so rife with corruption or partiality that [the evidence] would [then] be[come] objective . . .
>
> What makes the judiciary viable in any governmental setting is th[e] distance that impartiality and the appearance of impartiality . . . [create and which] people can rely on.

Id.

This Court rejects this argument as well. As recognized by the Minnesota Supreme Court: "A judge has a position of power and prestige in a democratic society espousing justice for all persons under law . . . Our legal system can function only so long as the public, having confidence in the integrity of its judges, accepts and abides by judicial decisions." *Complaint Concerning Winton*, 350 N.W.2d 337, 340 (Minn. 1984). It is also well recognized that political activity by a judge or judicial candidate creates a potential for conflicts of interests. *See, e.g., Peterson*, 490 N.W.2d at 422. Accordingly, Defendants need not show that individual cases were decided wrongly due to the corruption of the judicial system caused by those activities prohibited by Canon 5.

The Court finds that Defendants have established that the State of Minnesota has a compelling interest in maintaining the actual and apparent integrity and independence of its judiciary and that the bans on political activity may be upheld if they are narrowly tailored to serve that interest.

B. Narrowly Tailored

Plaintiffs argue that the bans on political activity are not narrowly tailored to serve the state's interest in protecting the independence of the judiciary. Plaintiffs assert that the bans resulted in the Third Party Plaintiffs not being able to receive or transmit any political communications relating to Wersal, such as his name, law school or employer. As noted above, however, this argument is without merit. Alternative means exist through which voters may obtain information concerning judicial candidates. Because such information is available to the Third Party Plaintiffs through such means, the Court finds the Canons are narrowly tailored to serve the state's compelling interests.

C. Vague

The Third Party Plaintiffs further argue that Canon 5 does, in fact, infringe upon their rights under the First Amendment because the Canon is vague. Canon 5(A)(3)(c) provides that a candidate for judicial office "shall not authorize or knowingly permit any other person to do for the candidate what the candidate is prohibited from doing under the Sections of this Canon." The Third Party Plaintiffs assert that this provision is constitutionally vague, as it can be interpreted as prohibiting any supporter of a candidate from engaging in the proscribed political activities, including political parties and their members. They argue that any supporter who attends a political gathering on the judicial candidate's behalf, or otherwise engages in conduct on behalf of the judicial candidate in such a way as to permit an inference that the candidate knew of such activities, technically violates the Judicial Codes—leaving open the possibility that an ethical complaint may be filed.

The Court finds this argument to be without merit as well. To succeed on the argument that the Canon is unconstitutionally vague, Plaintiffs must show that "men of common intelligence must necessarily guess at its meaning." *Broadrick v. Oklahoma*, 413 U.S. at 607, 93 S.Ct. 2908. The words "authorize" and "permit" are commonly used words

that both involve the concept of consent.[6] "Knowingly permit" is a commonly used phrase in Minnesota statutes, *See*, Levinger Aff., Ex. 8 and 9, and it has been given a narrow construction by the Minnesota Supreme Court. *See*, *Johnson v. Holzemer*, 263 Minn. 227, 116 N.W.2d 673 (1962). In *Holzemer*, the court held that the phrase "knowingly permit" as used in a criminal statute that declared "every person . . . knowingly permitting any such minor to violate [a firearm's possession law] shall be guilty of a misdemeanor" applied only to those persons having "some right to authoritative control" over such minor, such as a parent, a guardian, a teacher or law enforcement officer. *Id.* 263 Minn. at 237, 116 N.W.2d at 679. Thus, the statute only applied to persons who had the power to give or enforce commands or directions to the minor. *Id.* Given this interpretation by the Minnesota Supreme Court, the terms "authorize" and "knowingly permit" as used in Canon 5(A)(3)(c) applies only to those persons over which the judicial candidate has some right or authoritative control. This interpretation necessarily implies that only if a close connection exists between the judicial candidate and the supporter, will the provisions in Canon 5 A(3)(c) come into play.

D. Equal Protection

The Third Party Plaintiffs also argue that the partisan political prohibitions provided in Canon 5 violate their right to equal protection as such prohibitions are applicable to political parties only, and not special interest groups. Plaintiffs assert that the asserted compelling state interest of maintaining the independence of the judiciary would also be served by imposing similar prohibitions on special interest

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[6] "Permit" is defined as: 1. To consent to: Allow. 2. To give permission to or for: authorize. 3. To afford opportunity to. Webster's II New College Dictionary (1995). "Authorize" is defined as: 1. To give authority or power to. 2. To approve or permit: sanction. *Id.*

groups such as the Minnesota Women Lawyers, or Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life.

The Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution provides that "No State shall . . . deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law." To survive an equal protection challenge, Defendants must demonstrate that the state has a compelling state interest justifying the classification, and that such classification is narrowly tailored to serve such interest. At the same time, however, the Court must keep in mind that a state need not exercise the full extent of its power to prevent an evil in order to comply with the equal protection clause. *Morial*, 565 F.2d at 302 n. 6 (relying on *Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1, 29, 96 S.Ct. 612, 46 L. Ed. 2d 659 (1976)). *See also, Broadrick*, 413 U.S. at 607, n. 5, 93 S.Ct. 2908 (recognizing that "the legislature must have some leeway in determining which of its employment positions requires restrictions on partisan political activities and which may be left unregulated . . . And a state can hardly be faulted for attempting to limit the positions upon which such restrictions are placed.")

In this case, the Minnesota Supreme Court "chose to limit what it perceived to be the most problematic type of political conduct by judicial candidates—that linking those candidates with partisan political parties." Memorandum of Defendant Flinn in Support of Motion for Summary Judgment, p. 18. Partisan political activity was determined to be the most problematic given the breadth of the parties' platforms and agendas, and of the greater membership and affiliations than special interest groups. Furthermore, Defendants assert that special interest groups may exist that would be an appropriate contact for a judicial candidate, such as a group created to support improvements in the administration or organization of the courts.

Other courts have upheld statutes that treat partisan political activity different from non-partisan political

activity. *See e.g., Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. at 562, 93 S.Ct. 2880 (upholding Hatch Act, which restricted political activities of federal employees, but not non-partisan political activity); *Bauers v. Cornett*, 865 F.2d 1517, 1525 (8th Cir. 1989).

Because the Judicial Codes' restrictions on partisan political activity clearly relate to the state's compelling interests, there is no violation of the equal protection clause. In so finding, the Court has determined not to fault the Minnesota Supreme Court for not exercising the full extent of its power to eradicate all possible sources of improper influence towards the judiciary.[7]

II. Ban on Judicial Candidate Personally Soliciting Contributions

Canon 5 B(2) of the Judicial Codes prohibits a judicial candidate from personally soliciting campaign contributions. The Canon also provides that a judicial candidate may establish a committee to solicit and accept funds on the candidate's behalf, but the committee is prohibited from disclosing the identity of contributors.

Defendants assert that the state has a compelling interest in avoiding "unfair pressure on the solicited, poten-

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[7] Plaintiff Wersal argues that the state cannot discriminate against political parties as opposed to special interest groups on the basis that the U.S. Supreme Court has consistently held that the government cannot prohibit the fundamental rights of free speech or free association based on the content of the speech or the type of group engaging in the speech. Wersal Reply Memorandum in Support of Motion for Summary Judgment, p. 7. Wersal then cites to a number of Supreme Court cases, such as *R.A.V. v. City of St. Paul*, 505 U.S. 377, 387, 112 S.Ct. 2538, 120 L. Ed. 2d 305 (1992). Plaintiff's reliance *R.A.V.* is misplaced, however. The Court in *R.A.V.* specifically noted that "presumptive invalidity does not mean invariable invalidity, leaving room for such exceptions . . . with respect to certain speech by government employees" citing to *Broadrick, supra*, and *Letter Carriers, supra*.

tial pressures on the judge to later show favoritism, and the appearance of corruption." Defendant Flinn Memorandum in Support of Motion for Summary Judgment, p. 21. Defendants further assert that the Canon is narrowly tailored to serve this purpose, as it allows judicial candidates to obtain financial support for his/her campaign through a committee while safeguarding its compelling interest by preventing the candidate from learning of the contributions' source.

A similar ban was upheld by the Third Circuit in *Stretton*, 944 F.2d at 146. *See also, Suster v. Marshall*, 951 F. Supp. 693, 704 (N.D. Ohio 1996) *aff'd*, 149 F.3d 523 (6th Cir. 1998) (Ohio Judicial Code prohibiting judicial candidates from personally soliciting campaign funds appeared to be constitutional).

Plaintiff Wersal does not appear to contest that the state has a compelling interest in preventing the undue influence of money on judicial candidates. Wersal argues, however, that the ban on personal solicitation is unconstitutional as it is not narrowly tailored to serve such interest because other Code provisions protect the interest. Wersal argues that any concern with the corrupt influence of money on judicial candidates is fully alleviated by the Code provision that prevents a judicial candidate from knowing the identity of contributors. In support, Wersal cites to *Stretton* for the proposition that it is the candidate's knowledge of the contribution that gives the appearance of undue influence. The Court does not agree. The court in *Stretton* stressed that a judicial candidate's personal solicitation of campaign contributions "lends itself to the appearance of coercion or expectation of impermissible favoritism." *Stretton*, 944 F.2d at 146. Thus, although in *Stretton* the court acknowledged that the codes at issue did not prohibit the candidate from learning of contributors' identities, it held that "we cannot say that the state may not draw a line at the point where the coercive effect, or its appearance, is at its most intense, personal solicitation by the candidate." *Id.*

The Third Party Plaintiffs argue that the personal solicitation ban on judicial candidates violates their free speech and associational rights, relying on *Buckley v. Valeo*, *supra* and *Suster v. Marshall*, *supra*. Neither case, however, supports their argument that a ban on personal solicitation by judicial candidates violates first amendment rights. *Buckley* addressed limits on political contributions, and *Suster* addressed contribution limits and a ban on personal solicitation, expressly stating the ban on personal solicitation "appears constitutional."

The Court finds that the state has a compelling interest in preventing the undue influence, and the appearance of undue influence, that may result in a judicial candidate personally soliciting campaign funds. The Court further finds that the Codes are narrowly tailored to serve that interest.[5]

III. Announce Clause

In Count 2 of the Complaint, Plaintiffs argue that the announce clause violates their rights to free speech under the U.S. and Minnesota Constitutions. Prior to addressing the merits of Plaintiffs' claim, the Office of Professional Responsibility and the Lawyers Board argue that there is no case or controversy before the Court with respect to these Defendants. To establish a case or controversy, a plaintiff must demonstrate that there exists a danger of sustaining an injury as a result of a law's operation or enforcement. *Babbitt v. United Farm Workers National Union*, 442 U.S. 289, 298, 99 S.Ct. 2301, 60 L. Ed. 2d 895 (1979). It is sufficient if the injury is impending. *Id.* The

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[5] Wersal argues that he only seeks to personally solicit large groups, and that such a change to the Canons was recommended by the Minnesota State Bar Association. Wersal does not attempt to define "large group" nor does he explain why personally soliciting a large group is distinguishable from other groups. The Court finds, however, that there is no basis for such a distinction.

Lawyers Board and the Office of Professional Responsibility argue that they pose no injury or threat of injury with respect to the announce clause, as they have not enforced the clause and do not intend to do so unless the Court finds the clause constitutional. However, nonenforcement will not be an impediment to finding justiciability where the record does not show that the statute or rule at issue has been commonly and notoriously violated in the past. *See, San Francisco County Democratic Central Committee v. Eu*, 826 F.2d 814, 822 (9th Cir. 1987) *aff'd* 489 U.S. 214, 109 S.Ct. 1013, 103 L. Ed. 2d 271 (1989) (citing *Babbitt*, 442 U.S. at 302-303, 99 S.Ct. 2301 and *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97, 89 S.Ct. 266, 21 L. Ed. 2d 228 (1968)). In this case, there is no showing that the announce clause has been commonly and notoriously violated in the past. Thus, nonenforcement will not impede a finding of justiciability. Accordingly, the Court finds that it properly has jurisdiction to decide Count II as against all Defendants.

Canon 5 A(3)(d)(i) prohibits judicial candidates from "announcing their views on disputed legal or political issues." The Judicial Board[2] asserts that the announce clause serves the compelling state interest of maintaining the actual and apparent impartiality and independence of the judiciary by preventing a candidate from committing himself/herself as to certain issues prior to being faced with a particular case or controversy.

A number of courts in other jurisdictions have addressed the same or substantially similar issue. In each, the court has found that the state has a compelling interest in limiting the First Amendment rights of judicial candidates in order to maintain the actual and apparent impartiality and independence of the judiciary. *See, Buckley*, 997 F.2d at 227-228; *Stretton*, 944 F.2d at 142; *Ackerson*, 776 F. Supp.

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[2] The Lawyers Board and the Office of Professional Responsibility take no stand on the constitutionality of the announce clause.

at 312; *American Civil Liberties Union of Florida, Inc. v. Florida Bar*, 744 F. Supp. 1094, 1097 (N.D. Fla. 1990); *Berger v. The Supreme Court of Ohio*, 598 F. Supp. 69, 74 (S.D. Ohio 1984) *aff'd* 861 F.2d 719, 1988 WL 114792 (6th Cir. 1988).

> The public has a right to expect that a court will make an assessment of the facts based on the evidence submitted in each case, and that the law will be applied regardless of the personal views of the judge. Taking a position in advance of litigation would inhibit the judge's ability to consider the matter impartially. Even if he or she should reach the correct result in a given case, the campaign announcement would leave the impression that, in fact, if not in actuality, the case was prejudged rather than adjudicated through a proper application of the law to facts impartially determined.

Stretton, at 144.

This Court does not hesitate in finding that the state has a compelling interest, necessitating the restriction of judicial candidates' speech to maintain the integrity of the judiciary. The critical issue with respect to the announce clause is whether it is narrowly tailored to serve that interest. In *Stretton*, *supra*, the Third Circuit upheld similar language against a constitutional attack by construing the canon narrowly. In doing so, the court noted that the Chief Counsel of the Disciplinary Board, the General Counsel of the Judicial Inquiry and Review Board had interpreted the canon "as prohibiting a candidate only from announcing a position on an issue that may come before the court for resolution." *Id.*, 944 F.2d at 142. In construing the canon narrowly, the court also recognized that when a statute or regulation is challenged, the court should employ an interpretation that will avoid constitutional difficulties. *Id.* at 143 (citations omitted). The court then found that the State Supreme Court had, in the

past, interpreted its rules in the light necessary to obviate the constitutional objections. *Id.*

By contrast, the court in *Buckley, supra*, held the identical language violated the First Amendment, because the canon reached far beyond speech that could reasonably be interpreted as committing a candidate in a way which would compromise impartiality if such candidate succeeded in the election. The defendants in *Buckley* urged the court to adopt a narrow construction of the canon, by asserting the canon allows a candidate a right to reply, and that the word "announce" should be read to encompass only statements in which a judicial candidate tells the electorate how he/she will vote on a particular case. The court rejected the invitation to construe the canon in the narrow manner suggested by the defendants and the district court. *Id.* at 230. The court then went on to distinguish its determination from that in *Stretton*.

> The [Stretton] court did not have the benefit of the insight into the scope of such a rule as is provided by a ruling such as that of the Illinois Courts Commission that condemned so innocuous a statement as a candidate's report of his past record ruling on a particular type of case (Justice Buckley's comment on rape convictions.) Nor did it have to confront the complexities introduced by a concession that a candidate has a broad right of reply or that the word "announce" should be read to mean to foretell one's vote.

Buckley, at 230.

The Judicial Board asserts that the announce clause can and must be interpreted narrowly to preserve its constitutionality, consistent with federal and state law. The Judicial Board further argues that in those cases that have held similar announce clauses unconstitutional, the courts have done so on the "assumption that the prohibition

against announcing views on disputed legal or political issues leaves a judicial candidate with nothing more to discuss and put before the voters other than 'name, rank, and serial number.'" Defendant Flinn Memorandum in Support of Motion for Summary Judgment, p. 24. However, the announce rule does not prohibit judicial candidates from discussing or stating their views as to matters relating to judicial organization and administration, or to other issues involving the character of candidates, their background and experience. *Bundlie v. Christensen*, 276 N.W.2d 69, 72 (Minn. 1979). Thus, contrary to the finding of the court in *Buckley*, the Judicial Codes do not prevent candidates from discussing more than their name, rank and serial number.

Plaintiffs ask the Court to follow those cases that have found similar announce clauses unconstitutional. Plaintiffs further assert that the announce clause is modeled after an earlier version of the American Bar Association ("ABA") Model Canons, but that the ABA recently amended their Model Canons and that the current version provides that a judicial candidate shall not "make statements that commit or appear to commit the candidate with respect to cases, controversies or issues that are likely to come before the court . . ." ABA Model Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 5 A(3)(d)(ii). Plaintiffs would ask this Court to find that the fact that the ABA was compelled to change the language of the announce clause is evidence that the announce clause in effect in Minnesota is unconstitutional.

The Court acknowledges that in ruling on Plaintiffs' motions for a preliminary injunction, it initially ruled that Plaintiffs had shown a likelihood of success on the merits of its claim that the announce clause is unconstitutional as written. However, upon closer examination of the applicable case law, the Court is convinced that the announce clause is constitutional when narrowly construed.

When determining a facial challenge to a statute, the Court must uphold it if the statute's language is readily susceptible to a narrowing construction that would make it constitutional. *Virginia v. American Booksellers Ass'n*, 484 U.S. 383, 397, 108 S.Ct. 636, 98 L. Ed. 2d 782 (1988). "The elementary rule is that every reasonable construction must be resorted to, in order to save a statute from unconstitutionality." *Stretton*, at 144 (quoting *Edward J. DeBartolo Corp. v. Florida Gulf Coast Bldg. & Constr. Trades Council*, 485 U.S. 568, 575, 108 S.Ct. 1392, 99 L. Ed. 2d 645 (1988)). The Court further notes that the Minnesota Supreme Court "[w]hen possible, . . . narrowly construes a law subject to a facial overbreadth attack so as to limit its scope to conduct that falls outside first amendment protection while clearly prohibiting its application to constitutionally protected expression." *In Matter of Welfare of R.A.V.*, 464 N.W.2d 507, 509 (Minn. 1991), rev'd on other grounds, *R.A.V. v. City of St. Paul*, 505 U.S. 377, 112 S.Ct. 2538, 120 L. Ed. 2d 305 (1992).

Taking these practices into account, this Court finds that the Minnesota Supreme Court would interpret the announce clause narrowly, consistent with the construction urged upon the Court by the Judicial Board. This Court also notes that the announce clause, in its current form, was adopted by the Minnesota Supreme Court in 1974. Since that time, there have been many contested elections for judicial seats during which there was robust public discussion as to the candidate's qualification.[10] Thus, contrary to Plaintiffs' arguments, there is no evidence that the

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[10] A good example of such an election occurred in 1978, when Associate Justice Rosalie Wahl, the first woman to sit on the Minnesota Supreme Court, was challenged for the seat of Associate Justice by former Attorney General Robert Mattson Sr., Olmstead County District Court Judge Dan Foley and Ramsey County District Judge Jerome Plunkett.

announce clause has had a chilling effect on the First Amendment rights of judicial candidates in the past.

In conclusion, by interpreting the announce clause as only prohibiting discussion of a judicial candidate's predisposition to issues likely to come before the court, the announce clause serves the state's compelling interest in maintaining the actual and apparent integrity and independence of its judiciary, while not unnecessarily curtailing protected speech.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT:

1. The motions of Defendants Judicial Board and the Lawyers Board and the Office of Professional Responsibility for Summary Judgment [Docket Nos. 96 and 99] are GRANTED in their entirety. Plaintiffs' Complaint is hereby DISMISSED with prejudice.
2. The Plaintiffs' Motion for Summary Judgment [Docket No. 48] is DENIED in its entirety.

LET JUDGMENT BE ENTERED ACCORDINGLY.

APPENDIX I

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE EIGHTH CIRCUIT

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, AN ASSOCIATION; INDIAN ASIAN AMERICAN REPUBLICANS OF MINNESOTA; REPUBLICAN SENIORS, AN ASSOCIATION; YOUNG REPUBLICAN LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA, A MINNESOTA NONPROFIT CORPORATION; MINNESOTA COLLEGE REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION; GREGORY F. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; CHERYL L. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; MARK E. WERSAL, INDIVIDUALLY; CORWIN C. HULBERT, INDIVIDUALLY; CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE, AN ASSOCIATION; MINNESOTA AFRICAN AMERICAN COUNCIL, AN ASSOCIATION; MUSLIM REPUBLICANS, AN ASSOCIATION,

APPELLANTS,

V.

VERNA KELLY, IN HER CAPACITY AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE MINNESOTA BOARD OF JUDICIAL STANDARDS, OR HER SUCCESSOR; CHARLES E. LUNDBERG, IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIR OF THE MINNESOTA LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BOARD, OR HIS SUCCESSOR; EDWARD J. CLEARY, IN HIS CAPACITY AS DIRECTOR OF THE MINNESOTA OFFICE OF LAWYERS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, OR HIS SUCCESSOR,

APPELLEES.

No. 98-1625

Submitted: Oct. 19, 1998
Filed: Nov. 2, 1998

McMILLIAN, FAGG, and BEAM, JJ.

Gregory F. Wersal, a licensed Minnesota attorney and candidate for the position of Associate Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court, together with his campaign committee, Campaign for Justice, his wife, Cheryl L. Wersal, his brother, Mark Wersal, one of his supporters, Corwin C. Hulbert, the Minnesota Republican Party (MRP), and associations affiliated with the MRP (collectively plaintiffs), appeal from an order of the United States District Court[1] for the District of Minnesota denying their motion for a temporary restraining order or preliminary injunction in their action against the Chair of the Minnesota Board of Judicial Standards, the Chair of the Minnesota Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board, and the Director of the Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility. *Republican Party of Minnesota v. Kelly*, No. 98- 831 (D. Minn. Mar. 9, 1998) (memorandum opinion and order). Plaintiffs brought this civil action, and moved for injunctive relief, based upon the assertion that certain provisions of Canon 5 of the Minnesota Judicial Code, as amended on December 23, 1997, violate their rights under the free speech, free association, and equal protection clauses of the United States and Minnesota Constitutions. Jurisdiction was proper in the district court based upon 28 U.S.C. § 1331. Jurisdiction is proper in this court based upon 28 U.S.C. § 1292. Upon careful consideration of the record in the present case and the arguments presented on appeal, we hold that the district court did not abuse its discretion in denying plaintiffs' motion for a temporary restraining order or preliminary injunction under the standard set forth in *Dataphase Sys., Inc. v. C.L. Sys., Inc.*, 640 F.2d 109 (8th Cir. 1981) (en banc). At this stage of the litigation, we express no opinion

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[1] The Honorable Michael J. Davis, United States District Judge for the District of Minnesota.

on the merits of plaintiffs' claims. The order of the district court is affirmed. *See* 8th Cir. R. 47B.

BEAM, J., dissenting.

I dissent because the district court should have ordered a preliminary injunction on at least part of the claims asserted.

APPENDIX J

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT, D. MINNESOTA

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, ET AL.,
PLAINTIFFS,

V.

VERNA KELLY, IN HER CAPACITY AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE MINNESOTA BOARD OF JUDICIAL STANDARDS, ET AL.,
DEFENDANTS.

No. 98-831(MJD)

March 9, 1998

MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER

DAVIS, District Judge.

Plaintiffs move for an order pursuant to Rules 65(a) and 65(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, enjoining the Minnesota Lawyers Professional Responsibility Board, the Minnesota Office of Lawyers Responsibility and the Minnesota Board of Judicial Standards from enforcing sections of Canon 5 of the Code of Judicial Conduct (the "Judicial Codes") which prohibit judicial candidates from exercising their rights of free speech and free association guaranteed under the First Amendment.

Background

1. The Plaintiffs

Plaintiff Gregory F. Wersal ("Wersal") is an attorney licensed to practice law within the state of Minnesota. In 1996, he was a judicial candidate for the position of Associate Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court. Wersal states that he will also seek this position in 1998. Wersal's campaign committee, Campaign for Justice is also a named party in the present action before the Court. Also named as plaintiffs are Cheryl L. Wersal, wife of Greg Wersal, and Mark Wersal, Greg Wersal's brother. Corwin C. Hulbert is also a named plaintiff, as an unsolicited advocate of Wersal and his endorsement by the Republican Party and its Affiliated Associations, also named plaintiffs.

Plaintiffs state that during his 1996 campaign, the Campaign for Justice, as well as Wersal's wife, brother and members of the Republican party or an Affiliated Association, engaged or participated in one or more of the following types of speech or association on Wersal' behalf: attended gatherings of the Republican party and its affiliated associations and distributed campaign literature and spoke at such gatherings; announced that Wersal was in favor of a strict construction of the Constitution and was critical of certain decisions of the Minnesota Supreme Court; identified Wersal as a member of the Republican party; sought the Republican party's endorsement for Wersal; and solicited campaign contributions.

Also during Wersal's 1996 campaign, an individual filed a Complaint with the Minnesota Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility ("MOLPR") against Wersal, alleging violations of Canon 5 of the Judicial Codes. The Complaint was investigated and dismissed by the MOLPR.

On December 23, 1997, the Minnesota Supreme Court amended sections of Canon 5 of the Judicial Codes. Plaintiffs argue that as a result of these amendments, Wersal

and others on acting on his behalf, are prevented from engaging in the type of conduct described above, such as attending gatherings of the Republican party or its affiliated associations.

2. History of Canon 5 of the Judicial Codes

The Judicial Codes have included provisions regulating the conduct of judicial candidates in judicial elections since at least 1974. 52 M.S.A., Code of Judicial Conduct (1993). In the earlier version of the Judicial Codes, Canon 7 directed that judicial candidates should not do the following: make speeches for a political organization, Canon 7(A)(1)(b) (1993), solicit funds or make contributions to political organizations, or attend political gatherings, Canon 7(A)(1)(c), or engage in any other political activity except on behalf of measures to improve the law, the legal system, judicial administration or the administration of justice. Canon 7(A)(4). Canon 7 also directed that judicial candidates should maintain the dignity appropriate to judicial office and should encourage family, and employees or public officials subject to the candidate's control from doing what the candidate could not do. Canon 7(B)(1)(a) and (b) (1993). Also in the previous version of the Codes, judicial candidates were directed not to make pledges or to "announce his or her views on disputed legal or political issues" Canon 7(B)(c) (1993).

In 1995, the Judicial Codes addressing the regulation of judicial candidates were amended and are now addressed in Canon 5. Canon 5 was again amended on December 23, 1997, by adding language to clarify ambiguities that resulted from the 1995 amendments. The Sections of Canon 5 relevant to this motion, in its present form, is provided below, with the December 1997 amendments underscored:

A. In General.

Each justice of the supreme court and each court of appeals and district court judge is deemed to hold a separate nonpartisan office. MS 204B.06, Subd. 6.

(1) Except as authorized in Section 5B(1), a judge or a candidate for election to judicial office shall not:

(a) (a) act as a leader or hold any office in a political organization; *identify themselves as members of a political organization; except as necessary to vote in an election*;

(b) publicly endorse or, except for the judge or candidate's opponent, publicly oppose another candidate for public office;

(c) make speeches on behalf of a political organization;

(d) attend political gatherings; *or seek, accept or use endorsements from a political organization*; or

(e) solicit funds for or pay an assessment to or make a contribution to a political organization or candidate, or purchase tickets for political party dinners or other functions.

* * * * * *

(3) A candidate for a judicial office, including an incumbent judge:

(a) shall maintain the dignity appropriate to judicial office and act in a manner consistent with the integrity and independence of the judiciary, and shall encourage family members to adhere to the same standards of political conduct in support of the candidate as apply to the candidate;

(b) shall prohibit employees who serve at the pleasure of the candidate, and shall discourage other employees and officials subject to the candi-

date's direction and control from doing on the candidates behalf what the candidate is prohibited from doing under the Sections of this Canon;

(c) except as otherwise permitted by Section 5B(2), shall not authorize or knowingly permit any other person to do for the candidate what the candidate is prohibited from doing under the Sections of this Canon;

(d) shall not:

(*l*) make pledges or promises of conduct in office other than the faithful and impartial performance of the duties of the office; announce his or her views on disputed legal or political issues; or misrepresent his or her identity, qualifications, present position or other fact, or those of the opponent;

* * * * * *

B. (1) A judge or a candidate for election to judicial office may, except as prohibited by law,

(a) speak to gatherings, *other than political organization gatherings, on his or her own behalf;*

* * * * * *

(2) A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions or solicit publicly stated support. A candidate may, however, establish committees to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting campaign contributions and public support from lawyers, *but shall not seek, accept or use political organization endorsements.* Such committees shall not disclose to the candidate the

identity of campaign contributors *nor shall the committee disclose to the candidate the identity of those who were solicited for contribution or stated public support and refused such solicitation.* A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefits of the candidate or others.

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D. Political Organization. For purposes of Canon 5 the term political organization denotes a political party organization.

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3. Plaintiffs' Claims

In their Complaint, Plaintiffs have asserted five separate claims. In Count One, Plaintiffs allege that the prohibitions against judicial candidates, their families and others acting on the candidate's behalf, from attending and speaking at political gatherings, *See* Canon 5A(1) and B(1), infringes upon their rights to freedom of speech and association, as guaranteed them under the United States and Minnesota Constitutions. Complaint ¶ 35. Plaintiffs also allege that this prohibition violates the equal protection clauses of the United States and Minnesota Constitutions, as the Judicial Codes' definition of political organization affects political organizations such as the Republican Party, but no "special interest" organizations such as political action committees, the Minnesota Trial Lawyers Association or MADD. *Id.* ¶ 40. In Count II, Plaintiffs allege that the ban on judicial candidates from announcing their views on disputed legal or political issues, *See* Canon 5A(3), violates the individual plaintiffs' freedom of speech. *Id.* ¶¶ 42 and 61. Counts III and IV, assert claims involving the violation of the rights of freedom of speech, freedom of association and equal protection, as a result of the Judicial Codes ban on judicial candidates identifying their political party, *See*, Canon 5A(1), *Id.* ¶ 62 and the ban on seeking, accepting or using

political party endorsements, *See*, Canon 5A(1) and B(2). *Id.* ¶ 79. The last count, Count V, asserts the Judicial Codes' ban on judicial candidates personally soliciting campaign contributions, *See*, Canon 5B(2), is a violation of the right to freedom of speech. *Id.* ¶ 102.

4. Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and/or Preliminary Injunction

On March 3, 1998, precinct caucuses will be held throughout the state of Minnesota. Plaintiffs seek the above-referenced injunctive relief in order to fully exercise their constitutional rights of freedom of speech and freedom of association, without the threat of sanctions against Wersal at meetings of the Republican Party, including the precinct caucuses, the April 1998 Basic Political Organizational United Conventions, the May 1998 Congressional District Conventions and the June 1998 State Convention, as well as meetings of the affiliated associations.

Standards for Injunctive Relief

The Eighth Circuit has established that the following factors are to be used when considering a motion for preliminary injunctive relief:

> [W]hether a preliminary injunction should issue involves consideration of (1) the threat of irreparable harm to the movant; (2) the state of balance between this harm and the injury that granting the injunction will inflict on other parties litigant; (3) the probability that movant will succeed on the merits; and (4) the public interest.

Dataphase Sys., Inc. v. C.L. Sys., Inc., 640 F.2d 109, 113 (8th Cir. 1981); *accord Medtronic, Inc. v. Gibbons*, 527 F. Supp. 1085, 1090 (D. Minn. 1981), *aff'd*, 684 F.2d 565 (8th Cir. 1982).

1. Success on the merits

In their Complaint, the Plaintiffs present the Court with several claims involving the infringement of their funda-

mental rights to freedom of speech, freedom of association and equal protection under the law. In order to obtain the injunctive relief they seek, Plaintiffs must establish that the relevant sections of Canon 5 of the Judicial Codes are not narrowly tailored to serve a compelling state interest. *Stretton v. Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania*, 944 F.2d 137, 141-142 (3rd Cir. 1991).[1] In response to the allegations of Plaintiffs, the Defendants respond that the state of Minnesota has a compelling state interest in maintaining the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, and that the Judicial Codes are narrowly tailored to serve such interest.

In its limited opportunity to review the applicable case law, the Court finds that the state of Minnesota does have a compelling interest in maintaining the independence and impartiality of the judiciary. *See, e.g. Morial v. Judiciary Comm'n of Louisiana*, 565 F.2d 295, 302 (5th Cir. 1977). In order to reach a determination on the merits of the claims presented, this Court must reconcile the conflicts between the constitutionally guaranteed rights at issue in this case and the compelling interests of the state in regulating judicial elections. *Buckley v. Illinois*, 997 F.2d 224, 227 (7th Cir. 1993).

> Candidates for public office should be free to express their views on all matters of interest to the electorate. Judges should decide cases in accordance with law rather than with any express or implied commitments that they may have made to their campaign supporters or to others. The roots of both principles lie deep in our constitutional heritage. Justice under law

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[1] The Defendants assert that other standards may be applicable to the constitutional challenges presented by Plaintiffs in their Complaint. For the purposes of this motion, however, the Defendants will not dispute that the strict scrutiny standard is applicable.

> is as fundamental a part of the Western political tradition as democratic self-government and is historically more deeply rooted, having been essentially uncontested within the mainstream of the tradition since at least Cicero's time. Whatever their respective pedigrees, only a fanatic would suppose that one of the principles should give way completely to the other—that the principle of freedom of speech should be held to entitle a candidate for judicial office to promise to vote for one side or another in a particular case or class of cases or that the principle of impartial legal justice should be held to prevent a candidate for such office from furnishing any information or opinion to the electorate beyond his name, rank and serial number.

Id.

Because the conflicting interests involved in this case are of great import, the Court will hesitantly address the likelihood the Plaintiffs will succeed on the merits of their claims, given the limited time frame in which the Court was asked to decide Plaintiffs' motion.

In support of their claim that the "announce" rule contained in Canon 5A(3)(d)(*l*) infringes upon their right to freedom of speech, Plaintiffs note that three courts have already held similar language unconstitutionally overbroad and vague. *See, Buckley, supra*; *Beshear v. Butt et al.*, 863 F. Supp. 913 (E.D. Ark. 1994); *American Civil Liberties Union of Florida v. The Florida Bar*, 744 F. Supp. 1094 (N.D. Fla. 1990). The Defendants point out, however, that at least one court has held similar language constitutional. *Stretton*, 944 F.2d at 144. Defendants also argue that the announce rule does not prohibit judicial candidates from discussing or stating their views as to matters relating to judicial organization and administration, or to other issues involving the character of candidates, their background and experience. *Bundlie v. Christensen*, 276 N.W.2d 69, 72

(Minn. 1979). Thus, contrary to the finding of the court in *Buckley*, the Judicial Codes do not prevent candidates from discussing more than their name, rank and serial number.

The Court has reviewed the law cited by the parties in their briefs, and *at this time*, finds that those cases holding the "announce" rule unconstitutionally overbroad are more persuasive. Thus, Plaintiffs have established a likelihood of success on the merits as to Count Two.

The case law is not so clear with regard to the remaining Counts in the Complaint which involve the prohibitions against political activity by judicial candidates. Plaintiffs have not presented the Court with any cases that directly support their position on these remaining counts. Rather, in reviewing the relevant sections of Canon 5, the Court finds such sections appear to be narrowly tailored to serve the compelling state interest of maintaining the independence and impartiality of the judiciary. At this time, the Court thus finds that Plaintiffs have not established a likelihood of success on the merits as to Counts I, III, IV and V.

2. Irreparable Harm

The Defendants concede that an infringement of constitutional rights would constitute irreparable harm. *See*, Memorandum of Defendant Verna Kelly, page 4, n. 2. The Defendants argue, however, that the harm suffered by not allowing Plaintiffs to attend caucuses on March 3, 1998 would be slight in comparison to the harm to the public interest. The Court will thus proceed to the next factor, balance of hardships.

3. Balance of Hardships

In their brief, and in the arguments of counsel, Plaintiffs assert that the claims at issue in this case arose as a result of the December 23, 1997 amendments to Canon 5. For the most part, this is simply not the case. In fact, the only substantive changes that resulted from the December 1997 amendments were the addition of prohibitions against

judicial candidates from identifying themselves as a member of a political party, and the prohibition against seeking, accepting or using a political party's endorsement. The prohibitions against attending and speaking at political gatherings, announcing views on disputed legal or political issues, and personally soliciting funds have been in place for a number of years. Given this fact, the Court finds that the balance of harm weighs against granting Plaintiffs' motion for injunctive relief.

The Defendants have established that the state has a compelling interest in maintaining an independent and impartial judiciary. The relief sought will upset and derail the status quo as to such compelling state interests. As noted above, Plaintiffs have failed to establish a likelihood of success on the merits as to their claims, with the exception of the claim involving the announce rule. By granting the relief sought, no backup rules exist which would protect the state's compelling interests. With no regulations in place, judicial candidates will be given the opportunity to essentially turn the non-partisan judicial election process into a partisan one. Once that happens, the effects are irreversible. On the other hand, by maintaining the status quo and protecting the state's interest in maintaining a non-partisan judicial process for such time as is necessary to allow the Court to carefully consider the issues before it, the harm to the Plaintiffs is minimal as there are many more opportunities for them to receive political endorsements than just the March 3, 1998 caucuses.

4. Public Interest

For the reasons stated above, this factor also weighs against granting the injunctive relief sought, given the state's compelling interest in maintaining an independent and impartial judiciary.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that Plaintiffs' Motion for a Temporary Restraining Order and/or for Preliminary Injunctive Relief is DENIED.

APPENDIX K

RELEVANT CONSTITUTIONAL, STATUTORY, AND REGULATORY PROVISIONS

1. The First Amendment to the United States Constitution provides:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

U.S. Const., Amend. I.

2. Canon Five of the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct, 52 Minn. Stat. Ann., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

* * *

A Judge or Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain From Political Activity Inappropriate to Judicial Office

A. In General.

Each justice of the Supreme Court and each Court of Appeals and district court judge is deemed to hold a separate nonpartisan office, Minn. Stat. § 204B.06, subd 6.

(1) Except as authorized in Section 5B(1), a judge or a candidate for election to judicial office shall not:

(a) act as a leader or hold any office in a political organization; identify themselves as members of a political organization, except as necessary to vote in an election;

(b) publicly endorse or, except for the judge or candidate's opponent, publicly oppose another candidate for public office;

(c) make speeches on behalf of a political organization;

(d) attend political gatherings; or seek, accept, or use endorsements from a political organization; or

(e) solicit funds for or pay an assessment to or make a contribution to a political organization or candidate, or purchase tickets for political party dinners or other functions.

(2) A judge shall resign the judicial office on becoming a candidate either in a primary or in a general election for a non-judicial office, except that a judge may continue to hold judicial office while being a candidate for election to or serving as a delegate in a state constitutional convention, if the judge is otherwise permitted by law to do so.

(3) A candidate for a judicial office, including an incumbent judge:

(a) shall maintain the dignity appropriate to judicial office and act in a manner consistent with the integrity and independence of the judiciary, and shall encourage family members to adhere to the same standards of political conduct in support of the candidate as apply to the candidate;

(b) shall prohibit employees who serve at the pleasure of the candidate, and shall discourage other employees and officials subject to the candidate's direction and control from doing on the candidate's behalf what the candidate is prohibited from doing under the Sections of this Canon;

(c) except to the extent permitted by Section 5B(2), shall not authorize or knowingly permit any other person to do for the candidate what the candidate is prohibited from doing under the Sections of this Canon;

(d) shall not:

(i) with respect to cases, controversies or issues that are likely to come before the court, make pledges or promises that are inconsistent with the impartial performance of the adjudicative duties of the office; or knowingly, or with reckless disregard for the truth, misrepresent the identity, qualifications, expressed position or other fact concerning the candidate, or an opponent; or

(ii) by words or conduct manifest bias or prejudice inappropriate to judicial office.

(e) may respond to statements made during a campaign for judicial office within the limitations of Section 5A(3)(d).

B. Judges and Candidates for Public Election.

(1) A judge or a candidate for election to judicial office may, except as prohibited by law,

(a) speak to gatherings, other than political organization gatherings, on his or her own behalf;

(b) appear in newspaper, television and other media advertisements supporting his or her candidacy; and

(c) distribute pamphlets and other promotional campaign literature supporting his or her candidacy.

(2) A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions or solicit publicly stated support. A candidate may, however, establish committees to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such

committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting campaign contributions and public support from lawyers, but shall not seek, accept or use political organization endorsements. Such committees shall not disclose to the candidate the identity of campaign contributors nor shall the committee disclose to the candidate the identity of those who were solicited for contribution or stated public support and refused such solicitation. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

C. Incumbent Judges.

A judge shall not engage in any political activity except (1) as authorized under any other Section of this Code, (2) on behalf of measures to improve the law, the legal system or the administration of justice, or (3) as expressly authorized by law.

D. Political Organizations.

For purposes of Canon 5 the term "political organization" denotes an association of individuals under whose name a candidate files for partisan office.

E. Impartiality.

"Impartiality" or "impartial" denotes absence of bias or prejudice in favor of, or against, particular parties or classes of parties, as well as maintaining an open mind in considering issues that may come before the judge.

F. Candidate.

"Candidate" is a person seeking selection for or retention in judicial office by election. A person becomes a candidate for judicial office as soon as he or she makes a public announcement of candidacy, declares or files as a candidate with the election authority, or authorizes solicitation or acceptance of contributions or support. The term "candidate" has the same meaning when applied to a judge seeking election to nonjudicial office.

G. Applicability.

Canon 5 applies to all judicial candidates. A successful candidate, whether or not an incumbent, is subject to judicial discipline for his or her campaign conduct; an unsuccessful candidate who is a lawyer is subject to lawyer discipline for his or her campaign conduct. A lawyer who is a candidate for judicial office is subject to Rule 8.2 of the Minnesota Rules of Professional Conduct.

APPENDIX L
SELECTED STATE ETHICS CODES

1. Canon Seven of the Alabama Canons of Judicial Ethics, Ala. Rules of Court, Canons of Jud. Ethics, Canon 7 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

Canon 7

A Judge or a Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain From Political Activity Inappropriate to Judicial Office

* * *

A. Political Conduct in General.

(1) A judge or a candidate for election to a judicial office shall endeavor at all times to refrain from political activities inappropriate to the judicial office that he or she holds or seeks. It is desirable that a judge or a candidate for election to judicial office endeavor not to be involved in the internal workings of political organizations, engage in campaign activities in connection with a political candidate other than a candidate for a judicial office and not be involved in political fund solicitations other than for himself or herself. However, so long as judges are subject to nomination and election as candidates of a political party, it is realized that a judge or a candidate for election to a judicial office cannot divorce himself or herself completely from political organizations and campaign activities which, indirectly or directly, may be involved in his or her election or re election. Nevertheless, should a judge or a candidate for a judicial position be directly or indirectly involved in the internal workings or campaign activities of a political organization, it is imperative that he or she at all times conduct himself or herself in such a manner as to prevent any political considerations, entanglements, or influences from ever becoming involved in or from ever appearing to be involved in any judicial decision or in the judicial process.

(2) A judge shall resign his or her office when the judge becomes a candidate either in a political primary or in a general election for nonjudicial office, except that the judge may continue to hold judicial office while being a candidate for election to any judicial office or while being a candidate for election to a state constitutional convention or commission.

* * *

B. Campaign Conduct.

* * *

(4) *Campaign Financing.*

(a) A candidate is strongly discouraged from personally soliciting campaign contributions. It is highly recommended that a candidate establish committees of responsible persons to solicit and accept campaign contributions, to manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign, and to obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees may solicit and accept campaign contributions and public support from lawyers.

(b) Contributions to a judge's or a candidate's campaign shall be neither solicited nor accepted more than one year prior to the election in which the candidate participates as a candidate for judicial office or more than 120 days after that election.

(c) Candidates shall file reports as required by the Alabama Fair Campaign Practices Act.

* * *

2. Canon Five of the Alaska Code of Judicial Conduct, Alaska Court Rules, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (West 2006), provides in relevant part:

Canon 5. A Judge Or Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain From Inappropriate Political Activity

* * *

C. Judges Seeking Retention.

(1) A judge who is a candidate for retention in judicial office may engage in the following political activity to secure retention:

* * *

(b) in response to an unsolicited request,

(i) speak to public gatherings on behalf of his or her candidacy;

* * *

(c) form an election committee of responsible persons to conduct an election campaign in case there is active opposition to the judge's candidacy; and

* * *

(2) A Judge who is a candidate for retention in judicial office may engage in the following additional political activity when there is active opposition to the judge's candidacy:

(a) advertise in newspapers, on television, and in other media in support of his or her candidacy; and

(b) distribute pamphlets and other promotional literature supporting his or her candidacy.

* * *

(3) A judge who is a candidate for retention in judicial office shall not personally solicit or accept any funds to support his or her candidacy or personally solicit publicly stated support for his or her candidacy. However, if there

is active opposition to the judge's candidacy, the judge's election committees may engage in media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums, and any other legal methods of pursuing the judge's election. Such committees may solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions, manage and expend these funds on behalf of the judge's election campaign and solicit and obtain public statements of support for the judge's candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting reasonable campaign contributions and public support from lawyers. A candidate's committee may solicit contributions and public support for the candidate's campaign preceding the election and for 90 days thereafter. A judge shall not make private use of campaign funds raised by an election committee or use these funds for the private benefit of any other person or permit anyone else to use these funds for the private benefit of any person.

* * *

3. Canon Five of the Arizona Code of Judicial Conduct, 17A Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann., Sup. Ct. Rules, Rule 81, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

Canon 5. A Judge or Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain From Inappropriate Political Activity

* * *

(2) A judge or a non-judge who is a candidate for judicial office may speak to political gatherings on his or her own behalf.

(3) A judge may purchase tickets for political dinners or other similar functions but attendance at any such functions shall be restricted so as not to constitute a public endorsement of a candidate or cause otherwise prohibited by these canons.

* * *

B. Judicial Campaign Conduct.

(1) A candidate, including an incumbent judge, for a judicial office that is filled either by public election between competing candidates or on the basis of a merit selection system or retention election:

* * *

(2) A candidate, including an incumbent judge, for a judicial office, whether by a contested election or seeking the retention of the office according to law, shall comply with the Arizona statutes relating to the financial aspects of the candidacy. All candidates should refrain from personally soliciting campaign contributions. They should refer prospective contributors to the candidate's campaign committee.

(3) An incumbent judge who is a candidate for retention in or re-election to office may campaign for retention in or re-election to office; may obtain publicly stated support; and

in the manner provided in subsection B(2) may obtain campaign funds.

* * *

4. The Arkansas Code of Judicial Conduct, Ark. Code Ann., Code of Judicial Conduct, Terminology & Canon 5 (Lexis Nexis 2005), provides in relevant part:

"Political organization" denotes a group other than a political party, a purpose of which is to participate in the political process.

"Political party" has the same meaning as provided in Ark. Code Ann. § 7-1-101(16)(A), that is, "any group of voters which at the last-preceding general election polled for its candidate for Governor in the state or nominees for presidential electors at least three percent (3%) of the entire vote cast for the office." In the case of a newly organized political party, the term "political party" shall mean a party that satisfies the requirements contained in Ark. Code Ann. § 7-3-108(b).

* * *

Canon 5. A Judge or Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain From Inappropriate Political Activity

A. *All Judges and Candidates*

(1) Except as authorized in Sections 5B(2), 5C(1) and 5C(3), a judge or a candidate for election or appointment to judicial office shall not:

* * *

(d) directly or indirectly seek or use endorsements from a political party;

* * *

(f) publicly identify his or her current political party affiliation or lend one's name to a political party.

* * *

C. *Judges and Candidates Subject to Public Election.*

(1) A judge, or a candidate subject to public election may, except as prohibited by law:

(a) at any time

* * *

(i) speak to gatherings on his or her own behalf and may speak at gatherings of political organizations or political parties where all opposing judicial candidates for the same office have the opportunity to speak;

* * *

(2) A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions. A candidate may, however, establish committees of responsible persons to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support other than from political organizations parties for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting reasonable campaign contributions and public support from lawyers.

A candidate's committee may solicit contributions and public support for the candidate's campaign no earlier than 180 days before an election and no later than 45 days after the last contested election in which the candidate participates during the election year. Funds received prior to the 180 day limitation or after the 45 day limitation shall be returned to the contributor. If funds are received personally by a judicial candidate, the candidate shall promptly turn them over to the campaign committee. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others. Any campaign fund surplus shall be returned to the contributors or turned over to the State Treasurer as provided by law.

* * *

(3) A candidate for judicial office in a public election may not directly or indirectly solicit or promote the candidate's name to appear in promotions on a political

party's ticket or materials paid for by a political party. Except as prohibited by law, a candidate's name, picture or other identifying information may be listed in election material sponsored by a political organization.

* * *

5. Canon Five of the California Code of Judicial Ethics, Cal. Rules of Court, Code of Jud. Ethics, Canon 5 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

Canon 5. A Judge or Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain From Inappropriate Political Activity

* * *

C. Speaking at Political Gatherings. Candidates for judicial office may speak to political gatherings only on their own behalf or on behalf of another candidate for judicial office.

* * *

6. Canon Seven of the Colorado Rules of Judicial Discipline, Colo. Court Rules Ann., Ch. 24, Colo. Rules of Jud. Discipline, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 7 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

CANON 7. A JUDGE SHOULD REFRAIN FROM POLITICAL ACTIVITY INAPPROPRIATE TO HIS OR HER JUDICIAL OFFICE

A. Political Conduct in general.

(1) A judge shall not:

* * *

(c) Solicit funds for or pay an assessment or make a contribution to a political organization or candidate, attend political partisan gatherings, or purchase tickets for political party dinners or other similar functions;

* * *

B. Campaign Conduct.

* * *

(2) A judge who is a candidate for retention in office should abstain from any campaign activity in connection with the judge's own candidacy unless there is active opposition to his or her retention in office. If there is active opposition to the retention of a candidate judge:

(a) The judge may speak at public meetings;

* * *

(c) A nonpartisan citizens' committee or committees advocating the judge's retention in office may be organized by others, either on their own initiative or at the request of the judge;

(d) Any committee organized pursuant to subsection B(2)(c) may raise funds for the judge's campaign, but the judge should not solicit funds personally or accept any funds except those paid to

the judge by a committee for reimbursement of the judge's campaign expenses; and,

(e) The judge should not be advised of the source of funds raised by the committees.

* * *

7. Canon Seven of the Florida Code of Judicial Conduct, Fla. Stat. Ann., Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 7 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

Canon 7. A Judge or Candidate for Judicial Office Shall Refrain From Inappropriate Political Activity

* * *

C. Judges and Candidates Subject to Public Election.

(1) A candidate, including an incumbent judge, for a judicial office that is filled by public election between competing candidates shall not personally solicit campaign funds, or solicit attorneys for publicly stated support, but may establish committees of responsible persons to secure and manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and to obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting campaign contributions and public support from any person or corporation authorized by law. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or members of the candidate's family.

(2) A candidate for merit retention in office may conduct only limited campaign activities until such time as the judge certifies that the judge's candidacy has drawn active opposition. Limited campaign activities shall only include the conduct authorized by subsection C(1), interviews with reporters and editors of the print, audio and visual media, and appearances and speaking engagements before public gatherings and organizations. Upon mailing a certificate in writing to the Secretary of State, Division of Elections, with a copy to the Judicial Qualifications Commission, that the judge's candidacy has drawn active opposition, and specifying the nature thereof, a judge may thereafter campaign in any

manner authorized by law, subject to the restrictions of subsection A(3).

(3) A judicial candidate involved in an election or reelection, or a merit retention candidate who has certified that he or she has active opposition, may attend a political party function to speak in behalf of his or her candidacy or on a matter that relates to the law, the improvement of the legal system, or the administration of justice. The function must not be a fund raiser, and the invitation to speak must also include the other candidates, if any, for that office. The candidate should refrain from commenting on the candidate's affiliation with any political party or other candidate, and should avoid expressing a position on any political issue. A judicial candidate attending a political party function must avoid conduct that suggests or appears to suggest support of or opposition to a political party, a political issue, or another candidate. Conduct limited to that described above does not constitute participation in a partisan political party activity.

* * *

8. Canon Seven of the Georgia Code of Judicial Conduct, Ga. Code Ann., State Court Rules, Ga. Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 7 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

CANON 7. JUDGES SHALL REFRAIN FROM POLITICAL ACTIVITY INAPPROPRIATE TO THEIR JUDICIAL OFFICE

A. Political Conduct in General.

* * *

(2) Judges holding an office filled by public election between competing candidates, or candidates for such office, may attend political gatherings and speak to such gatherings on their own behalf when they are candidates for election or re-election.

* * *

B. Campaign Conduct.

(1) Candidates, including an incumbent judge, for any judicial office that is filled by public election between competing candidates:

* * *

(2) Candidates, including an incumbent judge, for a judicial office that is filled by public election between competing candidates, may personally solicit campaign contributions and publicly stated support. Candidates, including incumbent judges, should not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of themselves or members of their families.

* * *

9. Canon Five of the Idaho Code of Judicial Conduct, Idaho Rules of Court, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (West 2001), provides in relevant part:

CANON 5

A Judge or Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain from Inappropriate Political Activity

A. All Judges and Candidates.

(1) Except as authorized in Sections 5B(2) and 5C(1), a judge or candidate* for election or appointment to judicial office shall not:

* * *

(d) publicly endorse or seek the endorsement of a political organization; or

* * *

(2) A judge may attend political gatherings as long as by doing so the judge is not endorsing or seeking the endorsement of a political organization. A judge may speak at political gatherings concerning matters of law, the legal system or the administration of justice.

* * *

C. Judges and Candidates Subject to Public Election.

(1) A judge or candidate* subject to public election* may, except as prohibited by law*:

(a) when a candidate for election

(i) speak to gatherings on his or her own behalf;

* * *

(2) A candidate shall not solicit or accept campaign contributions in person. A candidate may establish committees of responsible persons to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for

the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting reasonable campaign contributions and public support from lawyers. A candidate's committee may solicit contributions and public support for the candidate's campaign no earlier than [one year] before election and no later than [90] days after the last election in which the candidate participates during the election year. Except as required by law, a candidate's judicial election committee should not disclose the names of contributors to judicial campaigns and judicial candidates and judges should avoid obtaining the names of contributors to the judicial campaign. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

* * *

10. Illinois Supreme Court Rule 67, Canon 7, Ill. Comp. Stat. Ann, Code of Jud. Conduct, S. Ct. Rule 67, Canon 7 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

Canon 7.

A Judge or Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain From Inappropriate Political Activity

* * *

B. Authorized Activities for Judges and Candidates.

(1) A judge or candidate may, except as prohibited by law:

(a) at any time

* * *

(ii) identify himself or herself as a member of a political party; and

* * *

(b) when a candidate for public election

(i) speak to gatherings on his or her own behalf;

* * *

(2) A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions. A candidate may establish committees of responsible persons to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting reasonable campaign contributions and public support from lawyers. A candidate's committees may solicit contributions and public support for

the candidate's campaign no earlier than one year before an election and no later than 90 days after the last election in which the candidate participates during the election year. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

(3) Except as prohibited by law, a candidate for judicial office in a public election may permit the candidate's name: (a) to be listed on election materials along with the names of other candidates for elective public office, and (b) to appear in promotions of the ticket.

* * *

11. Canon Five of the Indiana Code of Judicial Conduct, Ind. Code Ann. tit. 34, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

Canon 5. A Judge or Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain From Inappropriate Political Activity

A. All Judges and Candidates.

(1) Except as authorized in Sections 5B(2), 5C(1) and 5C(3) and 5D, a judge or a candidate for election or appointment to judicial office or retention in judicial office shall not:

* * *

(d) attend a gathering of a political organization;

* * *

C. Judges and Candidates Subject to Public Election.

(1) A judge or a candidate subject to public election, except as prohibited by law, may at any time:

(a) attend a gathering of a political organization and purchase a ticket for the gathering for the judge and the judge's guest;

(b) identify himself or herself as a member of a political party;

* * *

(d) speak to gatherings on his or her own behalf;

* * *

(2) A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions or personally solicit publicly stated support. A candidate may, however, establish committees or responsible persons to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not pro-

hibited from soliciting and accepting reasonable campaign contributions and public support from lawyers. A candidate's committees may solicit contributions and public support for the candidate's campaign no earlier than one (1) year before an election and no later than ninety (90) days after the last election in which the candidate participates during the election year. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

* * *

(3) Except as prohibited by law, a candidate for judicial office in a public election may permit the candidate's name: (a) to be listed on election materials along with the names of other candidates for elective public office, and (b) to appear in promotions of the ticket.

* * *

12. Canon Seven of the Iowa Code of Judicial Conduct, Iowa Code Ann. ch. 51, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 7 (West 2002), provides in relevant part:

Canon 7. A Judge Should Refrain From Political Activity Inappropriate to the Judicial Office

A. *Political Conduct in General.*

(1) A judge should not:

* * *

(b) Make speeches for a political organization or candidate or publicly endorse a candidate for public office;

(c) Solicit funds for or pay an assessment or make a contribution to a political organization or candidate, attend political gatherings, or purchase tickets for political party dinners, or other functions.

* * *

B. *Campaign Conduct.*

* * *

(2) A judge who is a candidate for retention in office without a competing candidate, and whose candidacy has drawn active opposition, may campaign in response thereto and may establish committees of responsible persons to obtain publicly stated support and campaign funds.

* * *

13. Kansas Supreme Court Rule 601A, Kan. Sup. Ct. Rules, Rule 601A, Canon (West 2002), provides in relevant part:

Rules of the Supreme Court of Kansas, Rule 601A. Code of Judicial Conduct

Canon 5. A Judge or Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain From Inappropriate Political Activity

A. All Judges and Candidates.

(1) Except as authorized in Sections 5B(2), 5C(1), 5C(3), and 5C(4), a judge or a candidate for election or appointment to judicial office shall not:

* * *

(d) attend political gatherings; or

* * *

C. Judges and Candidates Subject to Public Election.

(1) A judge or a candidate subject to public election may, except as prohibited by law:

(a) at any time

* * *

(ii) identify himself or herself as a member of a political party; and

* * *

(b) when a candidate for election

(i) speak to gatherings on his or her own behalf;

* * *

(2) A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions or solicit publicly stated support nor shall a candidate serve as his or her own campaign treasurer. A candidate subject to public election* may, however, establish committees of responsible persons to solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions, to

manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and to obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees may solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions and public support from lawyers. A candidate's committees may solicit contributions and public support for the candidate's campaign no earlier than one year before an election and no later than 90 days after the last election in which the candidate participates during the election year. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

* * *

(3) Except as prohibited by law, a candidate for judicial office in a public election may permit the candidate's name: (a) to be listed on election materials along with the names of other candidates for elective public office, and (b) to appear in promotions of the ticket.

* * *

14. Canon Five of the Kentucky Code of Judicial Conduct, Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann., S. Ct. R. 4.300, Ky. Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

CANON 5: A JUDGE OR JUDICIAL CANDIDATE SHALL REFRAIN FROM INAPPROPRIATE POLITICAL ACTIVITY.

* * *

B. Campaign Conduct.

* * *

(2) A judge or a candidate for judicial office shall not solicit campaign funds, but may establish committees of responsible persons to secure and manage the expenditure of funds for the campaign and to obtain public statements of support for the candidacy. A candidate's committees may solicit funds for the campaign no earlier than 180 days before a primary election. A candidate's committees may not solicit funds after a general election (See KRS 121.150). A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or a member of the candidate's family.

* * *

15. Canon Seven of the Louisiana Code of Judicial Conduct, La. Rev. Stat. Ann., Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 7 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

Canon 7

A Judge Or Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain From Inappropriate Political Activity

* * *

C. A Judge or a Judicial Candidate May:

(1) At any time

(a) attend political gatherings;

(b) identify himself or herself as a member of a political party;

* * *

D. Campaign Committees

(1) A judge or judicial candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions. A judge or judicial candidate may personally solicit publicly stated support.

(2) A candidate may also establish committees of responsible persons to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. However, no undue pressure or coercion may be applied in such solicitation.

(3) Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting or accepting campaign contributions or public support from lawyers. A candidate's committee may solicit contributions for the candidate's campaign no earlier than two years before the primary election. Contributions may be solicited after the last election in which the candidate participated only for the purpose of extinguishing the campaign debt resulting from that election. After the campaign debt is

extinguished, post election campaign contributions may not be solicited or accepted.

* * *

16. Canon Five of the Maine Code of Judicial Conduct, Me. Rules of Court, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

Canon 5

A Judge or Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain From Inappropriate Political Activity

A. Political Conduct of Incumbent Judges.

(1) A judge shall not:

* * *

(d) attend political gatherings;

* * *

C. Political Conduct of Candidates for Election as Judge of Probate.

(1) A candidate for election or reelection as judge of probate shall comply with the applicable provisions of subsection A(1) and the provisions of section B of this Canon, except as provided in subsections C(2)-(4) of this Canon.

(2) A candidate for election or reelection as judge of probate may, while a candidate,

(a) speak to gatherings on his or her own behalf;

* * *

(3) A candidate for election or reelection as judge of probate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions or personally solicit publicly stated support. A candidate may, however, establish committees of responsible persons to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibi-

ted from soliciting and accepting reasonable campaign contributions and public support from lawyers. A candidate's committees may solicit contributions and public support for the candidate's campaign no earlier than one year before an election and no later than 90 days after the last election in which the candidate participates during the election year. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

* * *

17. Canon Five of the Maryland Code of Judicial Conduct, Md. Code Ann.. Rule 16-813, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

Canon 5. Political Activity

* * *

B. Political Conduct of Judge Who Is Candidate.

(1) A judge who is a candidate for election or re-election to or retention in a judicial office may engage in partisan political activity allowed by law with respect to such candidacy, except that the judge;

* * *

18. Canon Seven of the Michigan Code of Judicial Conduct, Mich. Comp. Laws Ann., Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 7 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

CANON 7.

A Judge or a Candidate for Judicial Office Should Refrain From Political Activity Inappropriate to Judicial Office

A. Political Conduct in General.

* * *

(2) A judge or candidate for judicial office may:

(a) attend political gatherings;

* * *

B. Campaign Conduct.

* * *

(2) These provisions govern a candidate, including an incumbent judge, for a judicial office:

(a) A candidate should not personally solicit or accept campaign funds, or solicit publicly stated support by improper use of the judicial office in violation of B(1)(c). A judge may send a thank-you note to a contributor.

(b) A candidate may establish committees of responsible persons to secure and manage the expenditure of funds for the campaign and to obtain public statements of support for the candidacy.

(c) Such committees are prohibited from soliciting campaign contributions from lawyers in excess of $100 per lawyer, but may solicit public support from lawyers. It is not a violation of this provision for a committee, in undertaking solicitations that are not directed exclusively to lawyers but may in fact go to lawyers who are members of a group or found on a mailing list, to solicit more than $100 per person, provided that the following disclaimer appears on the letter or on a response card, in print that is at least

the same size as the remainder of the print in the letter or the response card:

"Canon 7 of the Michigan Code of Judicial Conduct prohibits a judicial campaign committee from soliciting more than $100 per lawyer. If you are a lawyer, please regard this as informative and not a solicitation for more than $100."

(d) A candidate's committee may not directly or indirectly accept funds from any committee that was established in connection with the candidate's attempt to secure any other judicial or nonjudicial office. The committee may solicit funds for the campaign no earlier than February 15 of the year of the election, and may not solicit or accept funds after the date of the general election.

* * *

19. Canon Five of the Mississippi Code of Judicial Conduct, Miss. Rules of Court, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

CANON 5

A Judge or Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain From Inappropriate Political Activity

A. All Judges and Candidates.

(1) Except as authorized in Sections 5B(2), 5C(1), and 5C(2), a judge or candidate for election shall not:

* * *

(c) solicit funds for or pay an assessment or make a contribution to a political organization or candidate, attend political gatherings, or purchase tickets for political party dinners, or other political functions.

* * *

C. Candidates Subject to Public Election

(1) Judges holding an office filled by public election between competing candidates, or candidates for such office, may, only insofar as permitted by law, attend political gatherings, speak to such gatherings in their own behalf while candidates for election or re-election, identify themselves as members of political parties and contribute to political parties or organizations.

(2) A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions or personally solicit publicly stated support. A candidate may, however, establish committees of responsible persons to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting reasonable campaign

contributions and public support from lawyers. A candidate's committees shall not solicit or accept contributions and public support for the candidate's campaign earlier than 60 days before the qualifying deadline or later than 120 days after the last election in which the candidate participates during the election year. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

* * *

20. Canon Five of the Missouri Code of Judicial Conduct, Mo. Rules of Court, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

2.03, Canon 5. A Judge and Certain of the Judge's Employees Shall Refrain From Inappropriate – Political Activity

A. Political Conduct in General

* * *

(2) Where it is necessary that a judge be nominated and elected as a candidate of a political party, an incumbent judge or candidate for election to judicial office may attend or speak on the judge or candidate's own behalf at political gatherings and may make contributions to the campaign funds of the party of choice. However, neither the judge nor the candidate shall accept or retain a place on any party committee or act as party leader or solicit contributions to party funds.

* * *

B. Campaign Conduct.

(1) A candidate, including an incumbent judge, for a judicial office that is filled either by public election between competing candidates or on the basis of the non-partisan court plan:

* * *

(2) A candidate, including an incumbent judge, for a judicial office that is filled by public election between competing candidates shall not solicit or accept campaign funds, but the candidate may establish committees of responsible persons to secure and manage the expenditure of funds for the campaign. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting campaign contributions. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or members of the candidate's family.

(3) An incumbent judge who is a candidate for retention in or reelection to office without a competing candidate, and whose candidacy has drawn active opposition, may campaign in response thereto and may obtain publicly stated support and campaign funds in the manner provided in Canon 5B(2).

* * *

21. Canon Five of the Nebraska Code of Judicial Conduct, Neb. Court Rules & Procedure, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

CANON 5

A Judge or Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain From Inappropriate Political Activity

* * *

C. Judges Subject to Retention Election.

(1) A judge or a candidate subject to retention election may, except as prohibited by law, when the judge's candidacy has drawn active opposition:

(a) purchase tickets for and attend political gatherings;

* * *

(c) speak to gatherings on his or her own behalf;

* * *

(2) A judicial candidate for retention election whose candidacy has drawn active opposition shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions or personally solicit publicly stated support. A judicial candidate for retention election whose candidacy has drawn active opposition may, however, establish committees of responsible persons to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting reasonable campaign contributions and public support from lawyers. A candidate's committees may solicit contributions and public support for the candidate's campaign no earlier than six months before an election and no later than 30 days after the last election in which the candi-

date participates during the election year. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

* * *

22. Canon Five of the Nevada Code of Judicial Conduct, Nev. Rev. Stat. Ann., S. Ct. Rules, Part VI, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (West 2004), provides in relevant part:

CANON Five. A judge or judicial candidate shall refrain from inappropriate political activities

* * *

C. Judges and Candidates Subject to Public Election.

(1) A judge or a candidate subject to public election may, except as prohibited by law:

* * *

(ii) upon request, identify himself or herself as a member of a political party; and

* * *

(2) A candidate may personally solicit or accept campaign contributions in accordance with the law or personally solicit publicly stated support. However, where practicable, a candidate is encouraged to use committees of responsible persons to solicit and accept such lawful contributions and conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means no prohibited by law. Such committees may also manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for the candidate. A candidate and a candidate's committees may solicit contributions and public support for the candidate's campaign no earlier than 240 days before the primary election, and no later than 90 days after the last election in which the candidate participates during the election year. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

* * *

23. Rule 21-800 of the New Mexico Court Rules, N.M. Rules Ann. 21-800, (2005), provides in relevant part:

Rule 21-800. A Judge Shall Refrain From Campaign Fund-Raising Activity Which Has the Appearance of Impropriety.

A. **Contributions Creating Appearance of Impropriety.** Candidates for judicial office in both partisan and retention elections shall refrain from campaign fund-raising activity which has the appearance of impropriety, and shall not accept any contribution that creates an appearance of impropriety.

B. **Solicitation for Other Campaigns and Candidates.** Subject to the restrictions of this rule, candidates in both partisan and retention elections for judicial office may solicit contributions for their own campaigns, but shall not solicit funds for any other political campaign, or for any candidate for any other office. Judicial candidates may run for election as part of a slate of judicial candidates and may participate in joint fund-raising events with other judicial candidates.

C. **Campaign committees.** Candidates in both partisan and retention elections shall establish committees of one or more responsible persons to conduct campaigns for the candidate using media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law or these rules. Campaign committees may solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions, and obtain public statements of support in behalf of the candidate, subject to the restrictions of these rules. All campaign contributions shall be paid or turned over to the campaign committee, and shall be managed and disbursed by the committee. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

D. **Unopposed Candidates in Partisan Elections.** Candidates in partisan elections for judicial office who have

a campaign fund, but who are unopposed or become unopposed in the campaign, shall return all unused and uncommitted campaign funds pro rata to the contributors of the funds, or donate the funds to a charitable organization, or to the State of New Mexico, as the candidate may choose, with disbursement of such funds to occur within thirty (30) days after the absence of opposition becomes known.

* * *

F. **Contributions by Attorneys and Litigants.** Candidates for judicial office, in both partisan and retention elections, shall not personally solicit or personally accept campaign contributions from any attorney, or from any litigant in a case pending before the candidate. Contributions from attorneys and litigants shall be made only to a campaign committee, and are subject to all the requirements of this rule. Campaign committees may solicit contributions from attorneys. Campaign committees shall not knowingly solicit a contribution from a litigant whose case is then pending before the candidate. Campaign committees shall not disclose to the judge or candidate the identity or source of any funds raised by the committee. If a case is pending before any candidate for the judicial office being contested, restrictions of this subparagraph apply to all candidates for that office.

* * *

24. Canon Five of the New York Code of Judicial Conduct, N.Y. Judiciary Law, App., N.Y. Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 5 (McKinney 2003), provides in relevant part:

CANON 5

A Judge or Candidate for Elective Judicial Office Shall Refrain from Inappropriate Political Activity

(A) Incumbent judges and others running for public election to judicial office. (1) Neither a sitting judge nor a candidate for public election to judicial office shall directly or indirectly engage in any political activity except (i) as otherwise authorized by this section or by law, (ii) to vote and to identify himself or herself as a member of a political party, and (iii) on behalf of measures to improve the law, the legal system or the administration of justice. Prohibited political activity shall include:

* * *

(c) engaging in any partisan political activity, provided that nothing in this section shall prohibit a judge or candidate from participating in his or her own campaign for elective judicial office or shall restrict a non-judge holder of public office in the exercise of the functions of that office;

* * *

(g) attending political gatherings;

* * *

(2) A judge or non-judge who is a candidate for public election to judicial office may participate in his or her own campaign for judicial office as provided in this section and may contribute to his or her own campaign as permitted under the Election Law. During the Window Period as defined in subdivision (Q) of section 100.0 of this Part, a judge or non-judge who is a candidate for public election to judicial office, except as prohibited by law, may:

(i) attend and speak to gatherings on his or her own behalf, provided that the candidate does not personally solicit contributions;

* * *

(iii) appear at gatherings, and in newspaper, television and other media advertisements with the candidates who make up the slate of which the judge or candidate is a part;

(iv) permit the candidate's name to be listed on election materials along with the names of other candidates for elective public office;

(v) purchase two tickets to, and attend, politically sponsored dinners and other functions, even where the cost of the ticket to such dinner or other function exceeds the proportionate cost of the dinner or function.

* * *

(5) A judge or candidate for public election to judicial office shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions, but may establish committees of responsible persons to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions and support from the public, including lawyers, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees may solicit and accept such contributions and support only during the Window Period. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

* * *

25. Canon Seven of the North Carolina Code of Judicial Conduct, N.C. Rules of Court, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 7 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

Canon 7

A Judge May Engage in Political Activity Consistent With His Status as a Public Official.

The provisions of Canon 7 are designed to strike a balance between two important but competing considerations: (1) the need for an impartial and independent judiciary and (2) in light of the continued requirement that judicial candidates run in public elections as mandated by the Constitution and laws of North Carolina, the right of judicial candidates to engage in constitutionally protected political activity. To promote clarity and to avoid potentially unfair application of the provisions of this Code, subsection B of Canon 7 establishes a safe harbor of permissible political conduct.

A. Terminology. For the purposes of this Canon only, the following definitions apply.

* * *

(2) To "solicit" means to directly, knowingly and intentionally make a request, appeal or announcement, public or private, oral or written, whether in person or through the press, radio, television, telephone, Internet, billboard, or distribution and circulation of printed materials, that expressly requests other persons to contribute, give, loan or pledge any money, goods, labor, services or real property interest to a specific individual's efforts to be elected to public office.

* * *

B. Permissible political conduct. A judge or a candidate may:

* * *

(3) identify himself as a member of a political party and make financial contributions to a political party or organization; provided, however, that he may not personally make financial contributions or loans to any individual seeking election to office (other than himself) except as part of a joint judicial campaign as permitted in subsection B(2);

(4) personally solicit campaign funds and request public support from anyone for his own campaign or, alternatively, and in addition thereto, authorize or establish committees of responsible persons to secure and manage the solicitation and expenditure of campaign funds;

* * *

26. Canon Five of the North Dakota Code of Judicial Conduct, N.D. Court Rules , Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

Canon 5

A Judge or Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain From Inappropriate Political Activity

A. All Judges and Candidates.

(1) Except as authorized in Sections 5B(2) and 5C(1), a judge or candidate* for election or appointment to judicial office shall not:

* * *

(d) seek or accept an endorsement or letter of support from a political party;

* * *

(f) purchase tickets for and attend political gatherings.

* * *

C. Judges and Candidates Subject to Public Election.

(1) A judge or a candidate subject to public election may, except as prohibited by law:

(a) at any time, publicly speak on behalf of his or her own candidacy or on behalf of measures to improve the law, the legal system, or the administration of justice, whether or not at a gathering sponsored by a political organization;

(b) when a candidate for election

(i) appear in newspaper, television and other media advertisements supporting his or her candidacy;

(ii) distribute pamphlets and other promotional campaign literature supporting his or her candidacy; or

(iii) publicly endorse or publicly oppose other candidates for the same judicial office in a public

election in which the judge or judicial candidate is running.

(2) A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions or personally solicit publicly stated support. A candidate may, however, establish committees of responsible persons to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting reasonable campaign contributions and public support from lawyers. A candidate's committees may solicit contributions and public support for the candidate's campaign no earlier than one year before an election and no later than 90 days after the last election in which the candidate participates during the election year. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

* * *

27. Canon Seven of the Ohio Code of Judicial Conduct, Ohio Rev. Code Ann., Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 7 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

Canon 7 Judges And Judicial Candidates Should Refrain From Political Activity Inappropriate to Judicial Office

(A) Definitions

* * *

(6) "Political party" has the same meaning as in section 3517.01 of the Revised Code and includes any national, state, or county political party.

(7) "Organization" means any entity or combination of two or more persons, other than a political party, including, but not limited to, a corporation, nonprofit corporation, partnership, limited liability company, association, professional association, continuing association, estate, trust, business trust, political action committee as defined as in section 3517.01 of the Revised Code, law firm, organization affiliated with a political party, labor organization, campaign committee of another candidate for public office, or caucus campaign committee.

* * *

(10) "Organization affiliated with a political party" means a combination of two or more persons, other than a political party or an organization, that is identified by its name or association with a national, state, or county political party or expressly promotes the interests, philosophy, or candidates of a political party.

* * *

(B) Political and campaign conduct in general

* * *

(3)(a) A judge or judicial candidate may do any of the following:

(iv) From the day on which he or she becomes a judicial candidate through the day of the primary election, identify himself or herself in person or in advertising as a member of or affiliated with a political party.

(b) After the day of the primary election, a judicial candidate shall not identify himself or herself in advertising as a member of or affiliated with a political party.

* * *

(C) Campaign Solicitations; use of Campaign Funds

* * *

(2)(a) A judicial candidate personally shall not solicit or receive campaign funds. A judicial candidate may establish a committee to secure and manage the expenditure of funds for his or her campaign and to obtain statements of support for his or her candidacy. The campaign committee shall not knowingly receive directly or indirectly for any political or personal purpose any of the following:

(i) A contribution from any employee of the court or person who does business with the court in the form of a contractual or other arrangement in which the person, in the current year or any of the previous six calendar years, received as payment for goods or services aggregate funds or fees regardless of the source in excess of two hundred fifty dollars. The committee may receive campaign contributions from lawyers who are not employees of the court or doing business with the court in the form of a contractual or other arrangement.

(ii) A contribution from any appointee of the court unless the campaign committee, on its campaign contribution and expenditure statement, reports the name, address, occupation, and employer of the appointee, identifies the person as an appointee of the court, and indicates whether the appointee, in the current year or in any of the previous six

calendar years, received aggregate compensation from court appointments in excess of two hundred fifty dollars.

(iii) A contribution from a political party unless the contribution is made from a separate fund established by the political party solely to receive donations for judicial candidates and the political party reports on the contribution and expenditure statements filed by the party the name, address, occupation, and employer of each person who contributed to the separate fund established by the political party.

* * *

(3) A judicial candidate shall not participate in or receive campaign contributions from a judicial fund raising event that categorizes or identifies participants by the amount of the contribution made to the event.

(4)(a) The campaign committee of a judicial candidate may begin soliciting and receiving contributions no earlier than one hundred twenty days before the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May of the year in which the general election is held. If the general election is held in 2000 or any fourth year thereafter. the campaign committee of a judicial candidate may begin soliciting and receiving contributions no earlier than one hundred twenty days before the first Tuesday after the first Monday in March of the year in which the general election is held. Except as provided in divisions (C)(4)(b) and (c) of this canon, the solicitation and receipt of contributions may continue until one hundred twenty days after the general election.

* * *

28. Canon Five of the Oklahoma Code of Judicial Conduct, Okla. Stat. Ann., tit. 5, ch. 1, app. 4, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (West 2001, supp. 2005), provides in relevant part:

CANON 5. A JUDGE OF JUDICIAL CANDIDATE SHOULD REFRAIN FROM INAPPROPRIATE POLITICAL ACTIVITY

* * *

C. Judges and Candidates Subject to Public Election.

(1) A judge or candidate subject to public election may, except as prohibited by law:

(a) speak to gatherings on his or her own behalf;

* * *

(2) A candidate should not personally solicit campaign contributions or personally solicit publicly stated support. A candidate may, however, establish committees of responsible persons to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting reasonable campaign contributions and public support from lawyers. A candidate's committees may solicit and/or accept contributions and public support for the candidate's campaign no earlier than 90 days before an election filing period and no later than 30 days after the last election in which the candidate participates during the election year. A candidate should not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

* * *

29. Oregon Code of Judicial Conduct Rule 4-102, Or. Code of Jud. Conduct Jud. R. 4-102 (2005), provides in relevant part:

JR 4-162

With respect to any election or appointment for judicial public office, a judicial candidate shall not knowingly:

* * *

(C) Publicly identify the judicial candidate, for the purpose of election, as a member of a political party other than by registering to vote or as allowed by ORS 249.015.

(D) Personally solicit campaign contributions in money or in kind, but a judicial candidate may establish one or more committees to obtain and manage finances, including contributions, and pay expenses to promote the judicial candidate's election.

* * *

30. Canon Seven of the Pennsylvania Code of Judicial Conduct, Pa. Cons. Stat. Ann., Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 7 (West supp. 2005), provides in relevant part:

Canon 7. A Judge Should Refrain From Political Activity Inappropriate to His Judicial Office

A. Political Conduct in General.

(1) A judge or a candidate for election to judicial office should not:

* * *

(c) solicit funds for or pay an assessment or make a contribution to a political organization or candidate, attend political gatherings, or purchase tickets for political party dinners, or other functions, except as authorized in subsection A(2);

* * *

(2) A judge holding an office filled by public election between competing candidates, or a candidate for such office, may, only insofar as permitted by law, attend political gatherings, speak to such gatherings on his own behalf when he is a candidate for election or reelection, or speak on behalf of any judicial candidate for the same office, identify himself as a member of a political party, and contribute to a political party or organization.

* * *

B. Campaign Conduct.

* * *

(2) A candidate, including an incumbent judge, for a judicial office that is filled by public election between competing candidates should not himself solicit or accept campaign funds, or solicit publicly stated support, but he may establish committees of responsible persons to secure and manage the expenditure of funds for his campaign and to obtain public statements of support for his candidacy. Such

committees are not prohibited from soliciting campaign contributions and public support from lawyers. A candidate's committees may solicit funds for his campaign no earlier than thirty (30) days prior to the first day for filing nominating petitions or the last day for filing a declaration of intention to seek reelection on a retention basis, and all fundraising activities in connection with such judicial campaign shall terminate no later than the last calendar day of the year in which the judicial election is held. A candidate should not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of himself or members of his family.

(3) An incumbent judge who is a candidate for retention in or reelection to office without a competing candidate may campaign and may obtain publicly stated support and campaign funds in the manner provided in subsection B(2).

* * *

31. Canon Five of the South Carolina Code of Judicial Conduct, S.C. App. Court Rule 501, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

CANON 5. A JUDGE OR JUDICIAL CANDIDATE SHALL REFRAIN FROM INAPPROPRIATE POLITICAL ACTIVITY

A. All Judges and Candidates.

(1) Except as authorized in Sections 5B(2), 5C(1) and 5C(3), a judge or a candidate for election or appointment to judicial office shall not:

* * *

(d) attend political gatherings; or

* * *

C. Judges and Candidates Subject to Public Election.

(1) A judge or a candidate subject to public election may, except as prohibited by law:

(a) at any time

(i) purchase tickets for and attend political gatherings;

(ii) identify himself or herself as a member of a political party; and

(iii) contribute to a political organization;

* * *

(b) when a candidate for election

(i) speak to gatherings on his or her own behalf;

* * *

(2) A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions or personally solicit publicly stated support. A candidate may, however, establish committees of responsible persons to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such

committees may solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting reasonable campaign contributions and public support from lawyers. A candidate's committees may solicit contributions and public support for the candidate's campaign no earlier than one year before an election and no later than 90 days after the last election in which the candidate participates during the election year. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

* * *

32. Canon Five of the South Dakota Code of Judicial Conduct, S.D. Codified Laws, ch. 12-16, App., Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (Lexis Nexis 2005), provides in relevant part:

CANON 5

A Judge or Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain from Inappropriate Political Activity

(1) Except as authorized in Sections 5B(2), 5C(1) and 5C(3), a judge or a candidate for election or appointment to judicial office shall not:

* * *

(d) attend political gatherings; or

* * *

C. Judges and Candidates Subject to Public Election.

(1) A judge or a candidate subject to public election may, except as provided by law:

(a) at any time

(i) purchase tickets for and attend political gatherings

(ii) identify himself or herself as a member of a political party for voting purposes only; and

* * *

(2) A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions or personally solicit publicly stated support. A candidate may, however, establish committees of responsible persons to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign

and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting reasonable campaign contributions and public support from lawyers. A candidate's committees may solicit contributions and public support for the candidate's campaign no earlier than 90 days before a primary election and no later than 90 days after the last election in which the candidate participates during the election year. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

* * *

(3) Except as prohibited by law, a candidate for judicial office in a public election may permit the candidate's name: (a) to be listed on election materials along with the names of other candidates for elective public office, and (b) to appear in promotions of his or her candidacy.

* * *

33. Canon Five of the Tennessee Code of Judicial Conduct, Tenn. Rules of Court, S. Ct. Rule 10, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

CANON 5

A Judge or Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain From Inappropriate Political Activity

* * *

C. Judges and Candidates Subject to Election

(1) A judge or a candidate subject to election may, except as prohibited by law.

(a) at any time

(i) purchase tickets for and attend political gatherings, subject to the limitations in (a)(iii);

(ii) identify himself or herself as a member of a political party; and

* * *

(b) when a candidate for election

(i) speak to gatherings on his or her own behalf;

* * *

(2)(a) A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions. A candidate may personally solicit publicly stated support and establish committees of responsible persons to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums, and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign, and may also obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting campaign contributions and public support from lawyers. A candidate's committees may solicit and accept contributions for the candidate's campaign no earlier than 180 days before an election (see

Commentary below) and no later than 90 days after the last election in which the candidate participates during the election year. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

(b) Candidates for judicial office must comply with all requirements of state law with regard to campaign finances, including but not limited to, all statutes relating to financial disclosure and campaign contribution limits.

* * *

(3) Except as prohibited by law, a candidate for judicial office in an election may permit the candidate's name: (a) to be listed on election materials along with the names of other candidates for elective public office and (b) to appear in promotions of the ticket.

* * *

34. Canon Five of the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct, Tex. Gov't Code Ann., tit 3A, subtitle G, app. B, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (2005), provides in relevant part:

Canon 5. Refraining From Inappropriate Political Activity

* * *

(4) A judge or judicial candidate subject to the Judicial Campaign Fairness Act, Tex. Elec. Code § 253.151, *et. seq.* (the "Act"), shall not knowingly commit an act for which he or she knows the Act imposes a penalty. Contributions returned in accordance with Sections 253.155(e), 253.157(b) or 253.160(b) of the Act are not a violation of this paragraph.

* * *

35. Canon Five of the Utah Code of Judicial Conduct, Utah Code of Jud. Admin., ch. 12, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (Lexis Nexis 2001), provides in relevant part:

* * *

Canon 5. A Judge Shall Refrain From Political Activity Inappropriate to the Judicial Office.

A. A candidate for selection by a judicial nominating commission shall not engage in political activities that would jeopardize the confidence of the public or of governmental officials in the political impartiality of the judicial branch of government. A candidate for selection to a judicial office shall not:

* * *

A. (3) seek support or invite opposition to the candidacy because of membership in a political party.

* * *

C. If a candidate for judicial office in a retention election or reappointment process has drawn active public opposition, the candidate may operate a campaign for office subject to the following limitations:

* * *

C. (2) The candidate shall not directly solicit or accept campaign funds or solicit publicly stated support, but may establish committees of responsible persons to secure and manage the expenditure of funds for the campaign and to obtain public statements of support. Committees may solicit campaign contributions and public statements of support from lawyers and non-lawyers. Surplus contributions held by the committee after the election shall be contributed without public attribution to the Utah Bar Foundation. Committees must not permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the judge or members of the judge's family.

C. (3) The candidate may speak to public gatherings on the candidate's own behalf.

* * *

36. Canon Seven of the Washington Code of Judicial Conduct, Wash. Ct. Rules, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 7 (West 2000), provides in relevant part:

* * *

CANON 7

Judges Shall Refrain From Political Activity Inappropriate to Their Judicial Office

(A) Political Conduct in General.

(1) Judges or candidates for election to judicial office shall not:

* * *

(e) identify themselves as members of a political party, except as necessary to vote in an election;

* * *

(2) During judicial campaigns, judges or candidates for election to judicial office may attend political gatherings, including functions sponsored by political organizations, and speak to such gatherings on their own behalf or that of another judicial candidate.

* * *

(B) Campaign Conduct.

* * *

(2) Candidates, including incumbent judges, for a judicial office that is filled by public election between competing candidates shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions. They may establish committees of responsible persons to secure and manage campaign funds and to obtain public statements of support. Such committees may solicit campaign contributions and public support from lawyers and others. Candidates' committees may solicit contributions no earlier than 120 days from the date when filing for that office is first permitted and no later than 60 days after the final election in which the candidate partici-

pated. Candidates shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of themselves or members of their families. Candidates shall comply with all laws requiring public disclosure of campaign finances, which may require knowledge of campaign contributions. When an unsolicited contribution is delivered directly to the candidate, receipt and prompt delivery of the contribution to the appropriate campaign official is not prohibited.

* * *

37. Canon Five of the West Virginia Code of Judicial Conduct, W.Va. Code Ann., State Court Rules, Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (Lexis Nexis 2004), provides in relevant part:

Canon 5. A judge or judicial candidate shall refrain from inappropriate political activity

* * *

C. *Judges and Candidates Subject to Public Election.* — (1) A judge or a candidate subject to public election may, except as prohibited by law:

(a) at any time

* * *

(ii) identify himself or herself as a member of a political party; and

* * *

(2) A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions or personally solicit publicly stated support. A candidate may, however, establish committees of responsible persons to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums, and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign, and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting reasonable campaign contributions and public support from lawyers. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

* * *

(3) Except as prohibited by law, a candidate for judicial office in a public election may permit the candidate's name: (a) to be listed on election materials along with the names of

other candidates for elective public office, and (b) to appear in promotions of the ticket.

* * *

38. Wisconsin Supreme Court Rule 60, Wis. Code Ann. ch. 60, S.C.R. 60.06 (West 2005), provides in relevant part:

S.C.R. 60.06. A Judge or Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain From Inappropriate Political Activity

* * *

(2) Party membership and activities. (a) Individuals who seek election or appointment to the judiciary may have aligned themselves with a particular political party and may have engaged in partisan political activities. Wisconsin adheres to the concept of a nonpartisan judiciary. A candidate for judicial office shall not appeal to partisanship and shall avoid partisan activity in the spirit of a nonpartisan judiciary.

(b) No judge or candidate for judicial office or judge-elect may do any of the following:

1. Be a member of a political party.

2. Participate in the affairs, caucuses, promotions, platforms, endorsements, conventions, or activities of a political party of a candidate for partisan office.

* * *

(4) Solicitation and Acceptance of Campaign Contributions. A judge, candidate for judicial office, or judge elect shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions. A candidate may, however, establish a committee to solicit and accept lawful campaign contributions. The committee is not prohibited from soliciting and accepting lawful campaign contributions from lawyers. A judge or candidate for judicial office or judge-elect may serve on the committee but should avoid direct involvement with the committee's fundraising efforts. A judge or candidate for judicial office or judge-elect may appear at his or her own fundraising events. When the committee solicits or accepts a contribution, a judge or candidate for judicial of-

fice should also be mindful of the requirements of SCR 60.03 and 60.04(4).

(5) Solicitation and Acceptance of Endorsements. A judge or candidate for judicial office may solicit or accept endorsements supporting his or her election or appointment personally or through his or her committee. A judge, candidate for judicial office, or his or her committee is not prohibited from soliciting and accepting endorsements from lawyers and others. A judge or candidate for judicial office shall not knowingly personally solicit or accept endorsements from parties who have a case pending before the court to which election or appointment is sought. Nevertheless, a judge or judicial candidate may personally solicit or accept endorsements from the types of organizations that ordinarily make recommendations for selection to the office. In soliciting or accepting an endorsement, a judge or candidate for judicial office should be mindful of the requirements of SCR 60.03 and 60.04(4).

* * *

39. Canon Five of the Wyoming Code of Judicial Conduct, Wyo. Court Rules Ann., Code of Jud. Conduct, Canon 5 (Lexis Nexis 2005) provides in relevant part:

Canon 5. A Judge or Judicial Candidate Shall Refrain From Inappropriate Political Activity

A. *All Judges and Candidates.*—

(1) Except as authorized in Sections 5B(2) and 5C(1), a judge or candidate for election or appointment to judicial office shall not:

* * *

(d) attend political gatherings; or

* * *

C. *Judges and Candidates Subject to Public Election.*—

(1) A judge or a candidate subject to public election may,

(a) at any time

(i) purchase tickets for and attend political gatherings;

(b) when a candidate for election

(i) speak to gatherings on his or her own behalf;

* * *

(2) A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions or personally solicit publicly stated support. A candidate may, however, establish committees of responsible persons to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept reasonable campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting reasonable campaign contributions and

public support from lawyers. A candidate's committees may solicit contributions and public support for the candidate's campaign no earlier than one year before an election and no later than 30 days after the last election in which the candidate participates during the election year. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others.

Supreme Court, U.S.
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No. 05-566

In The

Supreme Court of the United States

MARTHA HOLTON DIMICK, CHAIRPERSON, MINNESOTA BOARD ON JUDICIAL STANDARDS, *et al.*, *Petitioners,*

v.

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, *et al.*, *Respondents.*

On Petition for a Writ of Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit

RESPONDENTS' BRIEF IN OPPOSITION

William F. Mohrman
Erick G. Kaardal
MOHRMAN & KAARDAL, P.A.
33 South Sixth Street
Suite 4100
Minneapolis, MN 55402
612/341-1074
612/341-1076 (facsimile)
Counsel for Gregory Wersal, Campaign for Justice, Kevin J. Kolosky

James Bopp, Jr.
Counsel of Record
Thomas J. Marzen
BOPP, COLESON & BOSTROM
1 South 6th Street
Terre Haute, IN 47807-3510
812/232-2434
812/235-3685 (facsimile)
Counsel for Republican Party of Minnesota, Indian Asian American Republicans of Minnesota (client list continued on inside cover)

Jan. 3, 2005

Bopp, Coleson & Bostrom client list continued from cover: *Republican Seniors, Young Republican League of Minnesota, Minnesota College Republicans, Muslim Republican, Minnesota African-American Republican Council, Cheryl L. Wersal, Mark E. Wersal, Corwin C. Hilbert, and Michael Maxim.*

Questions Presented

Minnesota selects its judges through a system of nonpartisan elections. Canon 5 of the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct, promulgated by the Minnesota Supreme Court, regulates the campaign finance and political activities of judges and judicial candidates. Canon 5 prohibits judges and judicial candidates from "personally solicit[ing] or accept[ing] campaign contributions." Instead, judges and judicial candidates must establish committees to handle all campaign finance matters, including the solicitation of contributions. Canon 5 also prohibits judges and judicial candidates from identifying themselves as members of, from seeking or accepting the endorsement of, and from attending and speaking at gatherings of, political patries. The questions presented are:

1. Whether Minnesota's rule precluding judges and judicial candidates from personally soliciting campaign contributions is inconsistent with the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, or otherwise invalid, insofar as it bars them from (1) signing letters requesting campaign contributions, and (2) making personal appeals for campaign contributions to "large groups" of individuals.

2. Whether Minnesota's restrictions on certain partisan political activities of judges and judicial candidates violate the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, or are otherwise invalid, to the extent that they bar judges and judicial candidates from (1) attending and speaking at political party gatherings, (2) identifying themselves as members of a political party, and (3) seeking, accepting, or using political party endorsements.

Parties to the Proceedings

The following individuals and entities are parties to the proceeding in the court below:

Respondents Republican Party of Minnesota, Indian Asian American Republicans of Minnesota, Republican Seniors, Young Republican League of Minnesota, Minnesota College Republicans, Muslim Republicans, Minnesota African American Republican Council, Cheryl L. Wersal, Mark E. Wersal, Corwin C. Hulbert, Michael Maxim, Gergory F. Wersal, Campaign for Justice, and Kevin J. Kolosky; were plaintiffs-appellants in the court of appeals;

Petitioner Martha Holton Dimick, in her capacity as Chairperson of the Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards, is the successor to Suzanne White, who was defendant-appellee in the court of appeals and previously Respondent in this Court. Ms. White was the successor to Verna Kelly, who also defendant-appellee in the court of appeals. Petitioner Kenneth L. Jorgensen, in his capacity as Director of the Minnesota Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility, was defendant-appellee in the court of appeals. Mr. Jorgensen succeeded Edward J. Cleary, who was defendant-appellee in the court of appeals and previously Respondent in this Court. Kent A. Gernander, in his capacity as Chair of the Minnesota Lawyers Professional Responsibility Borad, is the successor to Charles E. Lundberg, wo was defendant-appellee in the court of appeal and previously Respondent in this Court.

Corporate Disclosure Statement

In accord with Supreme Court Rule 29.6, Petitioners state that the Young Republican League of Minnesota is a nonprofit corporation, it has no parent corporation, and there is no publically held company owning 10% or more of stock in it. The Republican Party of Minnesota, Indian Asian American Republicans of Minnesota, Republican Seniors, Minnesota College Republicans, Campaign for Justice, Minnesota African American Republican Council and Muslim Republicans are not corporations, but are associations.

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52 Minn. Stat., Code of Judicial Conduct,
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Am. Bar Ass'n, ABA Joint Commission to Evaluate
the Model Code of Judicial Conduct, Final Draft Report
(2004) *available at* http://www.abanet.org/judicialethics/
finaldraftreport.html. 7

Opposition to Petition for Writ of Certiorari

Opinions Below

The *en banc* opinion of the court of appeals (Appendix to Petition for Writ of Certiorari 1a-86a ("App.")) is reported at 416 F.3d 738 (8th Cir. 2005). The panel opinion of the court of appeals (App. 88a-122a) is reported at 361 F.3d 1035 (8th Cir. 2004). This Court's decision (App. 123a-180a) is reported at 536 U.S. 765 (2002). The court of appeals' first decision (App. 183a-272a) is reported at 247 F.3d 854 (8th Cir. 2001). The decision of the district court (App. 273a-307a) is reported at 63 F. Supp. 2d 967 (D. Minn. 1999).

Jurisdiction

The court of appeals sitting *en banc* entered its judgment on August 2, 2005. The jurisdiction of this Court has been invoked under 28 U.S.C. § 1254(1).

Constitutional, Statutory and Regulatory Provisions

The relevant provisions of the United States Constitution and Minnesota's Code of Judicial Conduct are set forth at App. 323a-327a.

Statement of the Case

Respondents substantially agree with the Statement of the Case presented by the Petitioners in their Petition for Writ of Certiorari at 1-10 ("Petition").

Reasons for Denying this Petition

This Court has no reason to exercise its discretionary authority to review the *en banc* decision of the Eighth Circuit. The decision below held certain provisions of the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct unconstitutional because they clearly prohibited speech and association by judicial candidates in a manner forbidden by this Court's decision in *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002). Minnesota's bans on judicial candidates attending political party gatherings, identifying themselves as members of a political party, seeking, accepting, or using political party endorsements, and personally soliciting contributions from large groups cannot be justified under the Constitution.

The decision below created no conflict in the federal circuits or with any state court of last resort in any respect, and the Petitioners do not claim that it does. Indeed, the Eighth Circuit's holding striking down the ban on personal solicitation mirrors the decision of the Eleventh Circuit in *Weaver v. Bonner*, 309 F.3d 1312 (11th Cir. 2002).

The decision below also does not contradict any decision of this Court. It is not inconsistent in any way with this Court's decision in *White*, and its holding striking down the ban on partisan political identification and endorsement also follows the decision of this Court in *Eu v. San Francisco County Democratic Cent. Comm.*, 489 U.S. 214 (1989).

There is not even a conflict created with any federal district court decision or decision of any inferior state court. And even the inferior court decisions that Petitioners erroneously claim demonstrate "confusion" below in the wake of *White* concern provisions that were not even at issue in the Eighth Circuit decision.

Petitioners' request is really only based on their objection to *White* itself. It is actually based on policy, not law. It amounts to little more than an undisguised plea to reverse or to radically limit the scope of this Court's decisions in *White* and

Eu. But such a claim does not justify review under Supreme Court Rule 10.

Certainly, review by this Court of the issues decided by the Eighth Circuit would be extremely premature. The Eighth Circuit's decision on the issue of partisan identification and endorsement is a matter of first impression in the circuit courts. There is only one other circuit court decision on the issue of personal solicitation, and it is in agreement. Moreover, the whole matter of the proper scope of restrictions on judicial speech and association in the wake of *White* remains the subject of debate by legal scholars and authorities, as evidenced by the American Bar Association's continuing consideration and discussion of the matter. Thus, consideration of the issues raised by the Eighth Circuit's decision by this Court should await development of the law in the lower courts, review by legal authorities, and the responses of the States to this Court's decision in *White* through revisions of their judicial codes.

I. The Decision Below Creates No Conflict in the Circuits or with State Courts of Last Resort.

The *en banc* decision of the Eighth Circuit creates no conflict whatsoever with any decision by any court of any jurisdiction, much less any decision of any Circuit. Petitioners cannot and do not cite any case that conflicts with the Eighth Circuit decision striking down either Minnesota's solicitation clause or its partisan identification and endorsement clauses. So review by this Court is not warranted on this basis.

Rather than cause discord, the decision below is entirely consistent with the post-*White* decisions of all circuit and state courts of last resort on similar or related issues. It represents harmonious and consistent development of the law rather than an aberration or a decision that introduces conflict in appellate court interpretations of *White*, that would demand resolution by this Court.

A. There Is No Conflict Created by the Eighth Circuit's Decision on Minnesota's Partisan Identification and Endorsement Provisions.

The *en banc* Eighth Circuit's decision finding that the partisan identification and endorsement provisions[1] are unconstitutional created no conflict with the decision of any Circuit or any State court of last resort. This is a case of first impression on appeal; it is not a case ripe for review by this Court.

B. There Is No Conflict Created by the Eighth Circuit's Decision on Minnesota's Solicitation Clause.

Likewise, the Eighth Circuit decision striking down Minnesota's solicitation clause creates no conflict among Circuits or with state supreme courts. To the contrary, it is fully consistent with the only other decision by a Circuit.

The Minnesota solicitation clause states that: "A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions or personally solicit publicly stated support." Canon 5B(2). The Eighth Circuit held the clause unconstitutional because it failed to advance any interest in judicial impartiality described either as an interest in protecting against "bias for or against a party to a case," App. 45a, or as an interest "articulated as openmindedness."[2] *Id.* at 46a.

---

[1]52 Minn. Stat., Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 5A(1), states that judge[s] and "candidate[s] for election for judicial office shall not":

> (a) . . . identify themselves as members of a political organization, except as necessary to vote in an election . . . .
>
> (d) attend political gatherings; or seek, accept or use endorsements from a political organization.

Canon 5B(2) states that judicial candidates and their campaign committees may not "seek, accept or use political organization endorsements."

[2]This Court in *White* considered, but did not find, that the state

(continued...)

Likewise, the Eleventh Circuit has held unconstitutional Georgia's solicitation clause,[3] which provided that judicial candidates "shall not solicit campaign funds, or solicit publicly stated support." *Weaver*, 309 F.3d at 1322. Georgia's clause was "not narrowly tailored to serve Georgia's interest in judicial impartiality." *Id.* As the *Weaver* court explained,

> [I]mpartiality concerns, if any, are created by the State's decision to elect judges publicly. Campaigning for elected office necessarily entails raising campaign funds and seeking endorsements from prominent figures and groups in the community. See, e.g., *White*, 122 S. Ct. at 2542 (O'Connor, J., concurring) ('Unless the pool of judicial candidates is limited to those wealthy enough to independently fund their campaigns . . . the cost of campaigning requires judicial candidates to engage in fundraising.") The fact that judicial candidates require financial support and public endorsements to run successful campaigns does not suggest that they will be partial if they are elected. Furthermore, even if there is a risk that judges will be tempted to rule a particular way because of contributions or endorsements, this risk is not significantly reduced by allowing the candidate's agent to seek these contributions and endorsements on the candidate's behalf rather than the candidate seeking them himself. Successful candidates will feel beholden to the people who helped them get elected regardless of who did the soliciting of support. Canon 7(B)(2) thus fails strict scrutiny because it completely chills a candidate's speech on these topics while hardly advancing the state's interest in judicial impartiality at all.

---

[2](...continued)
compelling interest in impartiality included an interest in "openmindedness." *Id.* at 778-79.

[3]Georgia Code of Judicial Conduct Canon 7(B)(2).

309 F.3d at 1322-23.

Thus, the language of the Georgia solicitation canon was virtually identical to the language of the Minnesota clause. Moreover, the rationale of both Circuits is virtually the same: Both Circuits, following *White*, held that the "solicitation clauses" were subject to strict scrutiny and they were not narrowly tailored to satisfy any asserted State interest in securing judicial impartiality.

If anything, the *en banc* holding of the Eighth Circuit tracks *White* even more closely than the Eleventh Circuit in *Weaver*. Minnesota Canon 5(B)(2) specifically provides that campaign contributions should be made to campaign committees, which "shall not disclose to the candidate the identity of the campaign contributors," thus almost entirely foreclosing any possibility that campaign solicitations by candidates could lead to corruption.[4] As the *en banc* Eighth Circuit held, it is thus "unlikely. . . that a judicial candidate, if elected, would be a 'judge [who] has a direct, personal, substantial, pecuniary interest in reaching a conclusion [for or] against [a litigant in a case]' based on whether that litigant had contributed to the judge's campaign."App. 44a (*quoting Tumey v. Ohio*, 273 U.S. 510, 523 (1927)). The Georgia Judicial Code provided no such added insurance against claims of judicial partiality arising from personal solicitation of campaign funds by judicial candidates.

Certainly, there is no conflict between Circuits in holding that absolute prohibitions on judicial candidate solicitations for campaign support violate the Constitution. The two Circuits to have addressed the issue in the wake of *White* both agree that

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[4]In addition, Plaintiffs here attacked the Minnesota solicitation clause only to the extent that it prohibited judicial candidates from personally soliciting contributions from large groups or from signing letters seeking contributions, Petition 4; 46a, while the *Weaver* plaintiffs facially attacked the Georgia solicitations clause. 309 F.3d at 1317.

they do. There is no decision of any state court of last resort to the contrary.

C. Lack of Conflict of Circuits and Courts of Last Resort Proves the Prematurity of Any Review of the Decision of the Eighth Circuit in This Case.

That there is no conflict in the circuits, state courts of last resort, or even among lower courts on the issues addressed by the *en banc* Eighth Circuit decision is not surprising in view of the fact that this Court has only recently addressed the matter of judicial speech in context of judicial elections. The Eighth Circuit decision represents only the first comprehensive analysis and application of the principles announced in *White*, and it would be premature for this Court to accept it for review without the benefit of further development and elaboration of the law by lower courts.

Moreover, further consideration by this Court of these matters should also await an authoritative final response by the legal community to *White*. The American Bar Association (ABA) Joint Commission to Evaluate the Model Code of Judicial Conduct has only recently, on December 14, 2005, posted its Final Draft Report.[5] The ABA Commission is receiving comments on the Draft until March 15, 2006, and then submit its recommendations to the ABA House of Delegates. It is too early to know what final canons will be recommended, or how such revisions might be received by the States.

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[5] *See* http://www.abanet.org/judicialethics/finaldraftreport.html.

II. The Decision Below Presents No Conflict With Prior Decisions of This Court.

A. The Decision Below Is Fully Consistent With This Court's Decision in *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White* in Striking Down Both Minnesota's Partisan Identification and Endorsement Provisions and Its Solicitation Clause.

The *en banc* decision of the Eighth Circuit clearly and consistently applied the logic and principles announced by this Court in *White* to both the partisan identification and endorsement provisions and solicitation clause. Petitioners do not claim otherwise and thus review is not justified on this basis.

B. The Decision Below Is Fully Consistent With This Court's Decision in *Eu v. San Francisco County Democratic Cent. Comm.*

Further, this Court has already declared unconstitutional state laws prohibiting political parties from endorsing candidates for public office and prohibiting candidates for public office from seeking these political party endorsements. *Eu v. San Francisco County Democratic Cent. Comm.*, 489 U.S. 214 (1989). The Eighth Circuit decision is fully consistent with *Eu*, and the Petitioners objection is really to *Eu*, not to the Eighth Circuit's decision striking down the partisan identification and endorsement provisions.

Eu involved two California state laws relevant to the Petition. California Election Code § 11702 provided that the "official governing bodies" of political parties "shall not endorse, support, or oppose, any candidate for nomination by that party for partisan office in the direct primary election." California Election Code § 29430 further provided it was a misdemeanor for any primary candidate to claim that she is the officially endorsed candidate of the party. The *Eu* Court struck down both laws under the First Amendment.

The Court first rejected that the State had a compelling state interest in preventing intra-party friction during a primary

election. *Eu*, 489 U.S. at 227-228. Relevant here, the Court then found that the State's alleged compelling interest in avoiding confusion to the voters to be "paternalistic," *id.* at 223, stating that "a 'State's claim that it is enhancing the ability of its citizenry to make wise decisions by restricting the flow of information to them must be viewed with some skepticism'" *Id.* at 228 (*quoting Tashjian v. Republican Party of Connecticut*, 479 U.S. 208, 221 (1986) (*quoting Anderson v. Celebrezze*, 460 U.S. 780, 798 (1983))). The Court then noted that other groups were not prohibited from endorsing candidates and noted how those endorsements had not sowed seeds of confusion among the electorate, *Eu*, 489 U.S. at 228 n.18, then finally observed that there was simply no evidence to support the State's claim that the ban on endorsement served its alleged compelling state interest in avoiding confusion to the voters. *Id.* at 229.

Similarly, Minnesota's ban on partisan identification and endorsement forbid judicial candidates from identifying themselves as members of a political party, from seeking, accepting or using a political party endorsement, and from attending or speaking at political party gatherings. Minnesota alleges two compelling interests in support of this ban: protection against the appearance of a biased judiciary or a judiciary not having an open mind in deciding issues and protection of the separation of powers under Minnesota's constitution. Petition 26-30.

First, Petitioners' claim that restricting the flow of information to the voters through the political party bans is necessary to avoid Minnesota's citizens from perceiving their judiciary of being "biased," or lacking in "open mindedness," must be viewed with the same "skepticism" as the *Eu* Court regarded California's similar claim. Second, as in *Eu*, the State presents no evidence, but only the bald assertion that their judiciary will be viewed as biased or lacking in openmindedness absent the political party bans. Third, as in *Eu*, Minnesota's bans are woefully underinclusive, because the State does not ban judicial candidates from seeking, accepting

or using the endorsement of *other* political groups, of identifying themselves as members of *other* political groups, or from attending or speaking at the functions of *other* political groups. While underinclusiveness is not necessarily fatal to a State law, laws which are underinclusive cast great doubt on how actually "compelling" is the state's alleged compelling state interest. *White*, 536 U.S. at 779.

The Eighth Circuit's decision in this regard thus follows this Court's decision in *Eu*. It does not warrant plenary review on this basis.

III. This Case Does Not Present an Important Federal Question.

Without any conflict among the Circuits, the state courts of last resort, or this Court on the substantive issues addressed by the Eighth Circuit, the Petitioners nevertheless claim that "Confusion Reigns in State And Federal Courts," which "desperately require guidance." Petition 23. They claim that the Eighth Circuit decision creates a "crisis" that (1) erodes public confidence in the judiciary in "dozens of states" by striking down Minnesota's blanket ban on personal solicitation of funds by judicial candidates, *id.* at 13, (2) "eviscerates" all efforts of the States to forbid judicial candidates' partisan political activities by striking down the partisan identification and endorsement provisions, *id.* at 16, and (3) undermines the very structure of state governments by subverting separation of judicial power from the partisan politics. *Id.* at 20.

These claims do not state any cognizable basis for review under Supreme Court Rule 10. "Confusion" does not warrant this Court's review, unless it is manifested by a conflict in the Circuits which is absent here. In addition, "confusion," which amounts to a claim that this Court erred in *White* and *Eu*, or at least that the Eighth Circuit erred in applying some rule of law – rarely warrants this Court's discretionary review.

Furthermore, consistent and faithful application of the teachings of this Court's decision in *White* is not a "crisis,"

until and unless it is manifested in conflicting decisions of the Circuit courts. Such a conflict does not exist.

In any event, the claim of "confusion" and "crisis" is false. The Eighth Circuit decision clarifies rather than confuses, and it is simply an important first step in the application of the principles announced by this Court in *White* and *Eu*. And if "confusion" and "crisis" ever become manifest because some Circuit disagrees with the Eighth Circuit, this Court's rules will then allow this Court to resolve it.

A. There Is No "Confusion" in the Lower Courts That Warrants Clarification by This Court.

The Petitioners can show no confusion in the lower courts caused by the decision below or among the lower courts in the wake of *White*. Case law is developing in a consistent and logical manner.

Indeed, the only case cited and quoted by the Petitioners, Petition 23, in support of their claim of hapless judicial uncertainly in the wake of *White* in the lower courts is a single district court case, *North Dakota Family Alliance v. Bader*, 361 F. Supp.2d 1021, 1041-42 (D. N.D. 2005), which concluded without difficulty that North Dakota's prohibitions on judicial candidates making pledges or promises or making commitments was unconstitutionally overbroad, when applied to answering questionnaires that simply requested judicial candidates' views on legal and political issues. *Id.* at 1044.[6] These

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[6]The North Dakota decision is consistent with all the lower court decisions regarding the "pledges and promises" and "commits" clauses. In *Family Trust Foundation of Kentucky v. Kentucky Judicial Conduct Comm'n*, 388 F.3d 224 (6th Cir. 2004), the Sixth Circuit held that Kentucky could not demonstrate a likelihood of success on the merits in justifying their "pledges or promises" or "commits" clauses. The *Family Trust* court held that, "although the Supreme Court's decision in *White* applied only to an announce clause," the district court's preliminary injunction should stand because "the State

(continued...)

clauses have nothing to do with the Eighth Circuit decision.[7]

Since there is no confusion among the lower courts on the meaning or application of *White* to the partisan identification and endorsement provisions and to the solicit clause, Petitioners erect a strawman: They suggest that there is post-*White* confusion in the lower courts on whether the standards for judicial elections should be the same as for legislative and executive elections, citing a few cases that they claim represent limiting *White* exclusively to bans on judicial speech expressing views on political or legal issues. Petition 23-24 (*citing In re Raab*, 793 N.E.2d 1287 (N.Y. 2003); *In re Watson*, 794 N.E.2d 1 (N.Y. 2003); *In re Kinsey*, 842 S. 2d 77 (Fla. 2003); *In re Angel*, 31 Fla. Bar New, No. 23 (July 1, 2004); *In re Dunleavy*, 838 A.2d 338 (Me. 2003)).

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[6](...continued)
has enforced the promise and commit clause as a *de facto* announce clause, and therefore the State is unlikely to succeed in light of the binding precedent in *White*." 388 F.3d at 227. *See also Alaska Right to Life v. Feldman*, 380 F. Supp.2d 1080 (D. Alaska 2005) (stating that "pledges or promises" and "commitment" clauses were unconstitutional when construed to forbid judicial candidates from announcing views on political/legal issues); *Family Trust Foundation of Kentucky v. Wolnitzek*, 345 F. Supp.2d 672 (E.D. Ky. 2004) (same). *Also see Smith v. Phillips*, 2002 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 14913 (W.D. Tex. 2002) (holding unconstitutional judicial canon that prohibited a judicial candidate from "mak[ing] statements that indicate an opinion on any issue" that may come before him or her held unconstitutional).

[7]However, there is one district court decision that involves partisan political activities and it is consistent with the Eighth Circuit. *See O'Neill v. Coughlan*, No. 04 Civ. 1612 (N.D. Ohio, Sept. 14, 2004), *available at* http://www.legalaffairs.org/howappealing/20040914ONeillinjunction.pdf. (granting preliminary injunction against the Ohio Supreme Court Disciplinary Counsel, staying disciplinary proceedings against the judge for identifying himself as a member of a political party and for stating his views on the Ohio Supreme Court).

Of course, even if such confusion existed, it is neither explicitly addressed by one of the Questions Presented for Review here nor even implicitly suggested by the *en banc* Eighth Circuit decision at issue. Thus, this argument involves judicial canons not at issue herein and, with respect to which, the Petitioners apparently want this Court to issue an advisory opinion. In any case, however, none of the cited cases supports Petitioners' claim.

In re Raab upheld New York rules, limiting judicial candidates' contributions to political parties or other candidates, established "to ensure that political parties cannot extract contributions from persons seeking nomination for judicial office in exchange for a party endorsement." 793 N.E.2d at 325. *Dunleavy* upheld Maine's rule prohibiting judicial candidates from soliciting funds for contributing to other political candidates or political parties. 338 A.2d at 342. Neither of these cases involve provisions similar to the ones at issue here.

The other cases the Petitioners cite have to do with the application of *White* to "pledges or promises" or "commits" clauses, which are not at issue here and which may present an entirely different set of issues. In *In re Watson*, the New York Court of Appeals upheld the constitutionality of its "pledges or promises" clause, noting that "most statements identifying a point of view will not implicate the 'pledges or promises' prohibition" and that the "rule precludes only those statements of intention that single out a party or class of litigants for special treatment, favorable or unfavorable." 794 N.E.2d at 7. The case thus represents an authoritative construction by a state's highest court of that state's "pledges or promises" clause in a manner that conceivably avoids *White*'s condemnation. The same conclusion applies to *Kinsey*, where the Florida Supreme Court upheld its "pledges or promises" clause – which the Florida court authoritatively stated did not prohibit a "candidate from discussing philosophical beliefs" – in the face of a challenge by a judge who, as judicial candidate, "pledged her support and promised favorable treatment for certain parties

and witnesses who would be appearing before her." 842 So. 2d at 88-89.[8]

In sum, the lower courts have efficiently applied the general principles of *White*. There is no indication that they will not continue to do so, and the pleas of the Petitioners and their Amici for this Court to review this case on the grounds of "confusion" amount to nothing more than a request for an advisory opinion on issues not at issue here, or to micromanage the development of law in the lower courts.

B. The Eighth Circuit Decision Striking Minnesota's Absolute Ban on Personal Solicitation Creates No "Crisis" In the Lower Courts.

The Petitioners also request review of the blanket ban on personal solicitation of funds, claiming that the prohibition of such solicitations in 28 states is drawn into question, which is said to erode public confidence in the judiciary in "dozens of states." Petition 13, 13 n.5. Petitioners, however, grossly overstate the decision's scope and its conceivable impact on public perception of judicial impartiality.

First, the decision obviously only governs the seven states of the Eighth Circuit, and it directly affects only those with similar solicitation bans.[9] Thus, the matter is not resolved in the remaining 43 states, of which 23 have personal solicitation bans

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[8] *In re Angel* was a disciplinary action involving a Florida judge accused of partisan political activities for attending political gatherings in violation of a Florida canon in which the canon was not even challenged under *White* on constitutional grounds. *See Inquiry Concerning a Judge, Re: Carven D. Angel*, 867 So. 2d 379 (Fla. 2004).

[9] Arkansas, Ark. Code Ann., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2); Missouri, Mo. Rules of Court, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5B(2); Nebraska, Neb. Court Rules & Procedure, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2); North Dakota, N.D. Court Rules, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2); and South Dakota, S.D. Codified Laws, ch. 12-16, app., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2).

of some sort. The matter was also resolved for the 3 states of the Eleventh Circuit in *Weaver*, but this still leaves the matter unresolved for 40 states, of which 21 have some personal solicitation ban, and for 8 of the 10 Circuits. Thus, rather than suggesting some judicial crisis demanding this Court's attention and resolution, Petitioners' argument thus actually underscores the relative novelty of the matter in the lower courts and the prematurity of present plenary consideration of the matter by this Court.

Second, the only "error" that Petitioners point to is a claimed neglect of the State's interest in avoiding the appearance of partiality arising from judicial candidates' personal requests for contributions to be sent their campaign committees. Petition 14-15. But the plaintiffs in this case attacked the Minnesota "solicitation clause" for overbreadth on the grounds that it forbids candidates from personally soliciting contributions from large groups or from signing letters seeking contributions, when Minnesota also forbids candidate campaign committees from disclosing to candidates the source or amount of any contribution. So any claimed error in application of *White* here is far too narrow to support the contention that it amounts to an assault on the laws of "dozens" of States – much less to warrant plenary review by this Court.

C. The *En Banc* Eighth Circuit Decision Holding Unconstitutional the Minnesota Partisan Identification and Endorsement Provisions Creates No "Crisis" Among the States.

Petitioners argue that this Court should accept review of the partisan identification and endorsement provisions, because holding them unconstitutional "eviscerates" all efforts of the States to forbid judicial candidates' partisan political activities. Petition 16.

First, their claim neglects and blurs the fundamental distinction between state regulation of *elections* and regulation of political *campaigns*. The States have "broad power" to

proscribe the procedural mechanisms for holding elections. *Tashijian*, 479 U.S. at 217. This Court has upheld generally applicable and evenhanded restrictions that protect "the integrity and reliability of the electoral process itself." *Anderson*, 460 U.S. at 788 n.9.

But the decision below concerns only the conduct of judicial *campaigns* – and it is during campaigns that the very of purpose of the First Amendment in a democratic system is most at issue. Minnesota's ban is on non-partisan elections. *See Peterson* v. *Stafford*, 490 N.W.2d 418, 425 (Minn. 1992). Non-partisan elections are elections in which the judicial candidate is not identified by political party on the ballot or is not nominated by political parties. These non-partisan elections are unchallenged and fully intact in this case. Respondents have not challenged Minnesota's provisions for non-partisan judicial elections.

Second, Petitioners again grossly overstate the actual effect of the Eighth Circuit decision. Respondents have only challenged the provisions that relate to political party identification and endorsements, not numerous other provisions of the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct which limit judicial candidate involvement in the leadership of political party organizations, in endorsing or opposing other political candidates, in speaking on behalf of political party organizations, and in fundraising for political party organizations. *See generally* Minn. Code Jud. Cond., Canons 5A(1) and 5B(2).

Moreover, only 9 other states of the 19 states with non-partisan judicial *elections* (*elections* in which the party of the candidate is not disclosed on the ballot) have partisan activity *campaign* bans similar to those held unconstitutional here. Petition 17 n.8. Of these, only Arkansas and South Dakota are directly affected by the Eighth Circuit decision, so 7 of the 10 states with non-partisan elections remain unaffected. *Id.*[10]

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[10]From 1913 to 1970, Minnesota conducted non-partisan

(continued...)

The decision below has absolutely nothing to do with the ability of the States to conduct non-partisan judicial *elections*. It affects only judicial *campaigns* in a small minority of States and there remains ample room for further judicial consideration of the matter in other Circuits and in the state courts.

Finally, the State's interest in avoiding the appearance of judicial impartiality are not rationally served by a rule forbidding judges from publicly disclosing their political party affiliation and endorsements – pretending that a State interest in judicial impartiality is properly served by a rule that creates a veil of voter ignorance in order to foster voter illusion.

D. The Decision Below Does Not Subvert State Governmental Structure.

Finally, Petitioners also claim that the Eighth Circuit's decision threatens the framework of state governments, which have attempted to keep judges free from partisan politics. According to the Petitioners, the decision below "belittled the State's interest in having two political branches and a distinct, nonpolitical judicial branch." Petition 20.

First, Petitioners's claim that the partisan identification and endorsement ban protects the separation of powers under the Minnesota Constitution is unfounded. Petitioners refer to "separation" as a separation of judicial candidates from political parties. *Id.* But political parties are not "powers" under the Minnesota Constitution – they have no constitutional status. The powers separated under the Minnesota Constitution are the powers of legislative, executive and judicial branches. Banning judicial candidates from associating with political parties does

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[10](...continued)
legislative elections. *Independent Republican Party v. Spannaus*, 295 N.W.2d 650, 655 (Minn. 1980). However, there was no effort to ban political parties from participating in those campaigns in order to preserve the "non-partisan" character of those elections, and the Minnesota Supreme Court did not deem any such interest sufficient to override First Amendment considerations. *Id.* at 654-56.

nothing to enhance or protect "separation of powers," as recognized under the Minnesota Constitution.

Second, it is impossible to see in any event how the Eighth Circuit's decision undermines the fundamental nature of Minnesota's governmental structure when its Constitution requires judicial elections just as it requires elections for the State's legislative and executive branches. That Minnesota conducts judicial elections assumes that there will be controversial rivalries and policy differences among candidates for judicial office – and political party support of certain candidates is merely one expression of those differences. In other words, Minnesota explicitly rejects the very concept of impartiality that the Petitioners' would impose upon it as preferred policy, because the People of Minnesota have chosen to conduct judicial elections. Thus, far from "trampling" on the State's authority to structure their own governments, Petition 19, the Eighth Circuit decision reconciles Minnesota's judicial code with the fundamental premise of a state system in which the judiciary is elected and with the U.S. Constitution's protections for free speech and association.

Third, the Petitioners' argument is based on the unproven premise that political parties pose some special danger of corruption that special interest groups and individuals do not. The challenged provisions only forbids judicial candidates from identifying themselves as members of a political party, from attending political party meetings, and from seeking, accepting, or using political party endorsements. They forbid none of these things with respect to other political organizations: bar associations, manufacturing associations, farm organizations, unions, or any other special interest ranging from Mothers Against Drunk Driving to the National Abortion Rights Action League to the National Rifle Association to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Petitioners offer no evidence whatsoever that these special interest political organizations pose any less danger to judicial impartiality than do political parties.

To the contrary, special interest groups might very well pose a greater threat to judicial impartiality, precisely because they tend to focus on specific issues to exclusion of all else, while parties are likely to be more tolerant of divergent views because they seek majoritarian consensus. The partisan identification and endorsement bans devalue political parties, and a relative "decline of party strength inevitably will enhance the influence of special interest groups whose only concern all too often is how a political candidates vote on a single issue." *Branti v. Kinkel*, 455 U.S. 507, 532 (1980) (Powell, J., dissenting). It follows that special interest groups should have a particular interest in supporting bans on political party participation in judicial elections.

Finally, to the extent that bans on political party association and speech by judicial candidates effectively diminish the totality of speech in judicial campaigns, such bans increase the already inherent advantages of incumbency. Incumbents thrive on name recognition and the stature it brings, and challengers require extra help in overcoming this advantage that is denied them when political parties are effectively out of the picture. As the Eighth Circuit found, "the fruits of Canon 5 [the solicitation clause] appear to bear witness to its remarkably pro-incumbent character." App., 32a, n.9. The ban on partisan identification and endorsement are more calculated to insulate incumbents in office than to assure judicial impartiality.

So it makes no sense to argue without evidence that the Eighth Circuit's decision subverts Minnesota's system of elective democracy by simply permitting judicial candidates to speak to and associate with political parties to the same degree that they may speak to and associate with other all other political organizations and individuals.

IV. The Decision Below Properly Balances the First Amendment Rights of Candidates and Citizens Against the State's Interest In Preserving Judicial Impartiality.

A. The Eighth Circuit Properly Struck Down the Solicitation Clause.

The Eighth Circuit correctly found that Minnesota's solicitation clause violates the First Amendment guarantee, because the clause is not narrowly tailored to serve the state's compelling interest in an impartial judiciary. App. 44a.

Petitioners argue that the court erred because, without the solicitation clause, judges will feel pressured to decide cases in accordance with the wishes of their campaign contributors rather according to the law; therefore, judges will not be impartial or openminded – which Petitioners claim are the compelling interests justifying the clause. Petition 25-26. However, Petitioners' complaint is really against contributions to judicial candidates generally, not a candidate's solicitation of them. Further, for contributions to have such an effect, judges must know who has made them, which is prohibited by other provisions of Minnesota's code. Canon 5B(2). Thus, the solicitation clause itself does not protect the state interests in openmindedness or impartiality *at all*.

Moreover, the solicitation clause is not narrowly tailored since it goes well beyond personal one-on-one solicitations, the restriction of which the Respondents do not challenge, but to candidate requests for contributions made during a speech to large gatherings, or through fundraising letters. Judicial candidates cannot trace any specific contributor who makes a contribution as a result of such general solicitations (even if they know who their contributors are).

Thus, because judicial candidates are prohibited from knowing the identity of the *individual* contributor to their campaign, there can neither be actual bias, or the appearance of such bias, in favor of the *individual* contributor. Only the most

cynical of citizens could conclude that an anonymous donor's campaign contribution to a judicial campaign could create a "quid pro quo" from a judicial candidate who is legally prohibited from ever knowing there was a "quid."

Finally, the State would be on much firmer constitutional ground if it addressed the alleged evils of campaign contributions by regulating campaign contributions themselves. Contribution limits are used to address the undue influence resulting from large contributions. *See Nixon v. Shrink Missouri Gov't PAC*, 528 U.S. 377 (2000). While Minnesota has stringent contribution limits for virtually all state elected officials, Minn. Stat. § 10A.27, there are no contribution limits for judicial candidates. As a result, judicial campaigns in Minnesota can accept unlimited contributions from any individual or group.

B. The Eighth Circuit Properly Struck Down the Partisan Identification and Endorsement Clauses.

The Eighth Circuit properly found that Canon 5's outright bans on judicial candidates speaking to, accepting the endorsement of, or identifying themselves as members of political parties violated the First Amendment because they did not serve the state's alleged compelling interests in protecting judicial impartiality, non-partisan elections, or separation of powers.

First, Petitioners argue that judicial candidates will feel "beholden" to political parties if they seek their endorsement, or that the public will believe that judges are biased if they are endorsed by, or identified with, a political party. Petition 30. However, in order for a state law to survive strict scrutiny, the law must be supported by a compelling interest. If the State leaves appreciable areas of the claimed compelling interest unprotected, the law is "underinclusive." Underinclusive laws rarely survive strict scrutiny, because the fact that the state left appreciable areas of the allegedly compelling interest unprotected undermines the state's claim that the interest is genuinely compelling. *White*, 536 U.S. at 779 (2002); *see also First Nat'l Bank of Boston v. Bellotti*, 435 U.S. 765, 792-93 (1978). In fact,

the whole purpose of strict scrutiny is to "smoke out" whether the State's purpose in enacting the law at issue is to genuinely protect the allegedly compelling interest or actually furthers some other less-than-compelling or even illegitimate interest. *City of Cleburne v. Cleburne Living Center,* 473 U.S. 432, 441-42 (1985)

The Eighth Circuit found the partisan identification and endorsement bans "woefully underinclusive." App. 27a. The whole thrust of Petitioners' claim is that, if judicial candidates associate with political parties during their campaigns, the candidate will feel beholden to the political party and decide issues in accordance with their wishes. Petition 28-30. Yet, although the partisan identification and endorsement provisions prohibit judicial candidates' association with political parties, they do nothing to prohibit judicial candidates from obtaining the publicly stated support of other groups or individuals with equal or greater potential for corrupting influence on the judicial process. Thus, as the Eighth Circuit concluded, the real purpose behind the partisan identification and endorsement prohibitions could not be "judicial openmindedness." App. 32a. Rather, the effective purpose behind these provisions was to protect incumbency. *Id.* at 32a n.9.

Second, Petitioners argue that the political bans are necessary to protect the "non-partisan" nature of Minnesota's judicial elections. Again, Petitioners fundamentally confuse an "election" with a "campaign." All a "non-partisan" election means is that the candidate's political party affiliation does not appear on the *election ballot on election day*. Non-partisan elections have nothing to do with *campaigns* and do not mean that political parties cannot support candidates or that candidates cannot seek the support of the political party during the *campaign*. *See California Democratic Party v. Lungren*, 919 F. Supp. 1397 (N.D. Cal. 1996) (ban on judicial candidates seeking political party endorsement based on the grounds that judicial elections are "non-partisan" is unconstitutional); *Mississippi Republican Party State Executive Comm. v. Musgrove*, No. 3:2CV1578HTW (S.D. Miss. Oct. 21, 2002) (holding it unconstitutional to bar party

endorsements for judicial candidates). The partisan identification and endorsement bans thus do not serve any legitimate interest in protecting non-partisan elections.[11]

Petitioners' claim that the plainly underinclusive character of the partisan identification and endorsement provisions can be

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[11]Notably, even the Minnesota Supreme Court seems of two minds on whether there is an overriding Minnesota interest that justifies the partisan identification and endorsement provisions. The court previously declared that state laws requiring candidates who declare themselves as "independent" in partisan elections to sign an affidavit that they will not seek, accept, or use the endorsement of a political party violate the candidate's right to associate with political parties under the U.S. Constitution. *Minnesota Fifth Congressional District Independent Republican Party v. Spannaus*, 295 N.W.2d 650 (Minn. 1980). As the court stated:

> The Minnesota statute challenged here is an attempt by the legislature to exercise control over the "quantity and range" of political expression by independent candidates and local parties. As respondent has noted, the statute not only prescribes qualifications for ballot access but also seeks to control the speech, association and conduct of independent candidates and prospective supporters during the campaign. It thus unconstitutionally restricts First Amendment rights of expression and association.

Spannaus, 295 N.W.2d at 655.

The Minnesota Supreme Court did refuse to repeal the partisan identification and endorsement bans in 2004 after the *White* decision (despite the advise of its own Advisory Panel – App. 7a-8a, n. 3 – because of the court's concern that judicial candidates will be, in the words of Petitioners, "declaring allegiance to a political party and its platform." Petition 11. However, in *Spannaus*, the court found that political parties were too diverse to be concerned about such allegiances: "Major parties encompass candidates of greater diversity. In many situations the label 'Republican' or 'Democrat' tells a voter little. The candidate who bears it may be supported by funds from the far right, the far left, or any place in between on the political spectrum." *Spannaus*, 295 N.W.2d at 654 n. 3 (*quoting Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1, 70 (1976)).

justified under the same rationale that *U.S. Civil Service Comm'n v. National Ass'n of Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. 548 (1973), upheld restrictions on the political activities of federal employees through the Hatch Act, 5 U.S.C. § 7323; 15 U.S.C. §§ 1501, 150.. Petition 27-28. Their analogy fails badly: It is one thing to restrict the political speech and association of government employees; it is quite another to restrict the speech and associations of candidates for elective office. The voters have an obvious and constitutionally compelling interest in associating with and understanding the positions of candidates for office, while they have no such interest in the political views of non-elected governmental employees.

In sum, the Eighth Circuit's decision holding the Minnesota partisan identification and endorsement provisions unconstitutional is plainly supported by reason and precedent. It was correctly decided and does not warrant review by this Court.

Conclusion

On the basis of the foregoing, Respondents pray this Court to deny the Petition for Writ of Certiorari filed in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

William F. Mohrman
Erick G. Kaardal
MOHRMAN & KAARDAL, P.A.
33 South Sixth Street
Suite 4100
Minneapolis, MN 55402
612/341-1074
612/341-1076 (facsimile)

James Bopp, Jr.,
Counsel of Record
Thomas J. Marzen
BOPP, COLESON & BOSTROM
1 South 6th Street
Terre Haute, IN 47807
812/232-2434
812/235-3685 (facsimile)

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No. 05-566

IN THE

Supreme Court of the United States

MARTHA HOLTON DIMICK, CHAIRPERSON, MINNESOTA BOARD ON JUDICIAL STANDARDS, *et al.*,
Petitioners,

v.

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, *et al.*,
Respondents.

On Petition for a Writ of Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit

REPLY BRIEF FOR PETITIONERS

MIKE HATCH
Attorney General
State of Minnesota

KRISTINE L. EIDEN
Deputy Attorney General

THOMAS C. VASALY
Assistant Attorney General

445 Minnesota Street
Suite 1100
St. Paul, MN 55101-2128
(651) 296-6752

THOMAS R. PHILLIPS
Counsel of Record
BAKER BOTTS L.L.P.
1500 San Jacinto Center
98 San Jacinto Boulevard
Austin, TX 78701-4039
(512) 322-2500

JEFFREY A. LAMKEN
MICHAEL G. PATTILLO, JR.
JACOB A. SOMMER
BAKER BOTTS L.L.P.
1299 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20004-2400
(202) 639-7700

Counsel for Petitioners

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REPLY FOR PETITIONERS

Respondents do not dispute that the Eighth Circuit's decision strikes down rules of judicial conduct adopted by more than half the States. Respondents concede that at least 29 States have prohibitions on direct solicitation, and 10 States have prohibitions on partisan activities, that are functionally indistinguishable from those held unconstitutional below. Br. in Opp. 14-16. Respondents nonetheless urge that the case does not warrant review because the Eighth Circuit's decision and a similar Eleventh Circuit decision are binding only on the eight States in those two circuits with similar prohibitions.

The argument all but answers itself. The fact that 20 percent of the many States with judicial elections now confront binding precedent striking down their laws—laws critical to the protection of judicial integrity, impartiality, and independence—itself underscores the importance of this case. But even outside the Eighth and Eleventh Circuits, the decisions create grave uncertainty for judicial candidates and officials charged with enforcing judicial codes. While the Eighth and Eleventh Circuits read *Republican Party* v. *White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002) (Pet. App. 123a-180a), as rendering restrictions on partisan activities and personal solicitation unconstitutional, numerous state supreme courts—and the ABA Joint Commission in its recently proposed draft Model Canons of Judicial Ethics—have chosen to retain or enforce such restrictions despite *White*. Consequently, "no state * * * can be sure how to conduct an election, and no judicial candidate can know the boundaries of permissible campaign behavior." Br. ABA 4.

For that reason, those most interested in the quality of state-court justice—the ABA, the Conference of Chief Justices ("CCJ"), the American Judicature Society ("AJS"), former Chief Justices from 15 States, 10 sovereign States, and the Nation's leading legal ethics and constitutional law scholars—have filed *amicus* briefs urging this Court to grant the petition. So too have 40 of the Nation's largest corporations, including General Electric, Motorola, PepsiCo, and Pfizer—regular participants in the judicial process with a strong interest in ensuring that the judiciary neither is nor appears

beholden to financial and partisan supporters. See Br. Concerned Corporations 1-4.

I. Respondents All But Confirm The Importance Of The Questions Presented

A. The Eighth Circuit's Decision Invalidates Judicial Canons Adopted By More Than Half The States

Although respondents concede that more than half the States have restrictions similar to those the Eighth Circuit invalidated below, they urge that the decision has limited impact. In particular, they contend that the Eighth Circuit's decision in this case, and the Eleventh Circuit's similar decision in *Weaver* v. *Bonner*, 309 F.3d 1312 (11th Cir. 2002), are binding only in "the seven states of the Eighth Circuit" and the "3 states of the Eleventh Circuit." Br. in Opp. 14-15, 16.

The question before the Court right now, however, is not how many States are bound by the decision below—although the impact is substantial even by that measure, see p. 1, *supra*. It is whether this case presents "an *important question* of federal law" that warrants this Court's review. S. Ct. R. 10(c) (emphasis added). The fact that more than half of the States (and 75 percent of those with judicial elections) have adopted rules like those held unconstitutional by the Eighth and Eleventh Circuits makes the validity of those rules a question of national importance. Time and again this Court has granted review where, as here, widely adopted state statutes are held unconstitutional by the courts of appeals. See, *e.g.*, *Nixon* v. *Shrink Mo. Gov't PAC*, 528 U.S. 377, 385 (2000) (review granted "[g]iven the large number of States" with similar statutes); *McGee* v. *Int'l Life Ins. Co.*, 355 U.S. 220, 221 (1957) (review granted because of issue's importance "not only to California but to other States which have similar laws"); see Br. ABA 6; Stern, Gressman, et al., *Supreme Court Practice* § 4.12, at 246 (8th ed. 2002) ("grant of certiorari on the basis of importance" often depends on "the impact of the ruling below upon the validity of similar statutes in other states").

When seeking this Court's review in *White*, respondents themselves urged that these issues have national importance.

They noted the widespread use of popular ballot to select state court judges; observed that the Minnesota canons at issue were "based in large measure on the ABA's Model Canons of Judicial Conduct"; and therefore declared that the validity of Minnesota's canons is "a matter of nationwide interest and importance." J.S. at 15-16, No. 01-521, *Republican Party* v. *White* (filed Sept. 24, 2001). Respondents offer no reason why the validity of those canons was important then but unimportant now. This Court, moreover, *granted review* in *White* to address the validity of the "announce clause"—a provision that barred candidates from announcing positions on disputed legal issues—even though it was then in effect in just nine States (only three of them in the Eighth Circuit) and had been dropped from the ABA's Model Code years earlier. Pet. App. 129a n.5; Br. AJS 7. This case, by contrast, seeks review of a decision invalidating restrictions that have been adopted by approximately 30 States (eight in the Eighth and Eleventh Circuits) and that remain in the ABA Model Code. It is impossible to say the issue raised in *White* was of national import but the issues raised here are not.

B. The State Supreme Courts And Lower Federal Courts Are In Disarray

Alternatively, respondents urge that "review by this Court" would be "premature," Br. in Opp. 3, because the "[c]ase law is developing in a consistent and logical manner," *id.* at 11. But state and federal courts have adopted wholly divergent readings of *White*. See Pet. 23-24. For example, New York's highest court has explained that *White* "did not declare * * * that judicial candidates must be treated the same as non-judicial candidates." *In re Raab*, 793 N.E.2d 1287, 1290 (N.Y. 2003) (per curiam). The Eleventh Circuit in *Weaver*, by contrast, reached the opposite conclusion, holding that, under *White*, "the standard for judicial elections should be the same as the standard for legislative and executive elections." 309 F.3d at 1321. The decision below is also irreconcilable with *McEntee* v. *MSPB*, 404 F.3d 1320, 1324-1325 & n.7 (Fed. Cir. 2005). See Br. Former Chief Justices 17-18.

The widespread disagreement is likewise reflected in the actions of state supreme courts in redrafting their rules after *White*. Many of those courts have adhered to (or like Wisconsin, reinforced) their prohibitions against partisan activities and personal solicitation in light of *White*. Br. Former Chief Justices 18; Br. AJS 6-14.[1] And the ABA Joint Committee's latest proposed Model Canons, revised in light of *White* and released after the decision below, retain provisions the Eighth and Eleventh Circuits have held unconstitutional. ABA Br. 15. Those decisions of the States' highest courts (and leading ethics authorities) cannot be reconciled with the Eighth Circuit's conclusion that such restrictions are unconstitutional.

Respondents' assertion that this Court should "await an authoritative final response by the legal community to *White*," including the ABA, Br. in Opp. 7, is thus wholly backwards. The "legal community," including the ABA, urges this Court to grant review *now* because no one can currently offer meaningful guidance on these issues. See p. 1, *supra*. The decisions in this case and *Weaver*, moreover, place the ABA in the untenable position of re-issuing Model Canons that are unconstitutional under the law of two circuits, or abandoning longstanding ethical prohibitions that protect "judicial independence, integrity, and impartiality." Br. ABA 10, 11-15.

II. This Case Implicates Interests Of The Highest Order

This case, moreover, concerns interests of the highest magnitude. The solicitation and partisan-activities restrictions invalidated below are critical to ensuring that state courts are—and are seen to be—free from the corrupting influence of money and unfettered by obligations incurred through partisan allegiances. The confusion over their validity profoundly

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[1] See Miss. Rules of Court, Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5A, Commentary (Feb. 26, 2004) (repealing announce clause, retaining solicitation clause); 42 Pa. Cons. Stat. Ann., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7B(2) (Nov. 21, 2002) (retaining solicitation clause); Enforcement of Rule 2.03, Canon 5.B(1)(C), Campaign Cond. (Mo. July 18, 2002) (en banc) (similar); In re Amendment to Rule 10, Rules of the Tennessee Supreme Court (Tenn. Oct. 11, 2005) (similar), In re Amendment of Supreme Court Rules, No. 00-07, 2004 WI 134, 274 Wis. 2d xlvii (Oct. 29, 2004) (similar).

"undermines the judiciary's ability to maintain public confidence in the courts." Br. AJS 15.

Respondents, for example, do not deny the appearance of impropriety that results when judges personally solicit campaign contributions from those with interests in the cases before them. Even large and influential corporations find such personal appeals "highly coercive." Br. Concerned Corporations 19. Minnesota's prohibition on personal solicitation—which separates the judge from requests for money by requiring a campaign committee to make such requests—"avoids the most egregiously coercive aspects of judicial campaign solicitation." *Id.* at 9. The decision below invalidates even that modest protection in a host of States and calls its validity into question throughout the Nation.

Likewise, the partisan-activities prohibition helps ensure that judges—unlike their counterparts in the political branches—do not become or appear beholden to political parties. Judges' singular loyalty to the law cannot be preserved when political parties, through the electoral process, become judge-makers. Sidestepping the issue, respondents urge that elections can remain "non-partisan" even when judges openly declare partisan affiliation and seek partisan support, because "the candidate's political party affiliation" still will "not appear *on the election ballot on election day*." Br. in Opp. 22. But experience has proven that, "without partisan activity restrictions, nominally nonpartisan judicial elections can readily be overtaken by politics as usual." Br. CCJ 16. For that reason, 10 States have concluded that regulating the partisan activities of judges and judicial candidates is necessary to ensure that elections are truly nonpartisan. Pet. 17 n.8; Br. AJS 6. Simply removing a candidate's party affiliation from the ballot does not prevent a judge from becoming beholden to a political party when the judge bases his campaign upon, owes his success to, and will be dependant for re-election on, party affiliation.[2]

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[2] The Federal Circuit and the First Circuit have both recognized that, for Hatch Act purposes, a candidate's partisan campaign activities can transform a nominally nonpartisan election—*i.e.*, where the candidate's

Respondents' claim that the First Amendment requires the invalidation of such regulations likewise supports immediate review. Downplaying the significance of the decision below, respondents suggest that States in other circuits may freely enforce the judicial canons invalidated by the Eighth and Eleventh Circuits. Br. in Opp. 14-15, 16-17. But if respondents are correct on the merits, that threatened enforcement is imposing irreparable First Amendment injury on judicial candidates. See *Capital Cities Media, Inc.* v. *Toole*, 463 U.S. 1303, 1304 (1983). For that reason too, prompt review is warranted.

III. Respondents' Merits Arguments Are Unsupported

A. The Eighth Circuit Misread This Court's Decisions

1. Respondents also urge the Court to deny review because, in their view, the petition never disputes that the Eighth Circuit "clearly and consistently applied the logic and principles announced by this Court in *White* to both the partisan identification and endorsement provisions and solicitation clause." Br. in Opp. 8. But the petition explicitly states that the "Eighth Circuit misread *White* to preclude virtually any regulation of judicial elections, without regard to judges' unique status in our system of government." Pet. 12. And it explains that, far "from supporting the Eighth Circuit's decision, this Court's decision in *White* underscores the legitimacy of the solicitation and partisan-activities restrictions at issue here." *Id.* at 25.

In *White*, the Court acknowledged the State's compelling interest in "preserving the impartiality of the state judiciary"—particularly with respect to potential biases for or against *particular parties*—but it faulted the "announce clause" as an effort to limit *speech* about *legal issues*. Pet. 25. The provisions at issue here, however, do not regulate speech about legal issues. They "merely address *relationships*" between candidates for non-partisan office and powerful political parties, as well as proposals for *financial transactions* "with

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party affiliation is not identified on the ballot—into a partisan one. *McEntee*, 404 F.3d at 1331-1332; *Magill* v. *Lynch*, 560 F.2d 22, 29 (1st Cir. 1977).

interested persons and parties—relationships that can create actual or apparent party bias, and interfere with judicial independence, by rendering the candidate seemingly beholden to political parties." *Ibid.* (emphasis added). The restrictions at issue here thus do not seek to muzzle speech related to official performance. They seek to ensure that, once elected, the judge's loyalty will be to the law—not to contributors or political parties.

2. Respondents' assertion that this case is controlled by *Eu* v. *San Francisco County Democratic Central Committee*, 489 U.S. 214 (1989)—and the claim that petitioners' "objection is really to *Eu*," Br. in Opp. 8—is more puzzling still. The Eighth Circuit did not find *Eu* controlling, and with good reason. The rules at issue in *Eu* governed the speech of the *political parties* themselves, prohibiting the parties from endorsing candidates in *partisan primaries*. 489 U.S. at 216. Here, in contrast, the regulations address the political affiliation and fundraising conduct of *judges* and *judicial candidates*. That distinction—between regulating the "*parties' speech about candidates for office*, rather than (as [this] Court approved in *Letter Carriers*) a ban on *partisan political conduct of the officeholders themselves*"—is "crucial." *Cal. Democratic Party* v. *Lungren*, 919 F. Supp. 1397, 1402 (N.D. Cal. 1996). This Court has upheld laws regulating the partisan activities of executive branch officers, citing the compelling interest in ensuring that officials "administer the law in accordance with the will of Congress, rather than in accordance with their own will or the will of a political party." *United States Civil Serv. Comm'n* v. *Nat'l Ass'n of Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. 548, 564-565 (1973). The States are likewise entitled to regulate partisan activities that might threaten a judge's or candidate's ability to "administer the law" according to neutral principles "rather than in accordance with" financial interests "or the will of a political party." *Ibid.*; see Pet. 27-28.

In *Eu*, moreover, the State sought to regulate speech because of its communicative impact on voters, citing the potential for "undue influence" and "confusion." *Eu*, 489 U.S. at 225-226. It is one thing to regulate, as so many States have,

the conduct of judicial candidates to ensure they perform and appear to perform impartially once in office. It is another to regulate the commentary of third parties about candidates, as in *Eu*, on the theory that the State can "enhanc[e] the ability of its citizenry to make wise decisions by restricting the flow of information." *Id.* at 228-229.

B. The Eighth Circuit's Analysis—And Respondents' Defense Thereof—Is Unpersuasive

1. With respect to the prohibition on personal solicitation, respondents do not dispute the legitimacy of the State's concern about judges appearing to "decide cases in accordance with the wishes of their campaign contributors," but urge that those concerns do not indict the Eighth Circuit's decision so much as "contributions to judicial candidates generally." Br. in Opp. 20. Not so. Campaign funding is a necessity when judges are elected, but that does not mean that States should be hamstrung in their efforts to minimize its impact (real and perceived) on judicial impartiality. Minnesota has attempted to mitigate that impact by separating the judge from fundraising, requiring all contributions to be solicited by campaign committees—not the judges or judicial candidates who will be expected to preside impartially over cases involving those solicited. Pet. 14-15.

Like the court of appeals, respondents urge that the ban on personal solicitation is unconstitutional because Minnesota's rules also bar judges from learning the identities of their contributors. Br. in Opp. 20. It is far from clear that the State's decision to enact one proscription can render another unconstitutional (at least without allowing the State to choose between them). See Br. Concerned Corporations 19-20. In any event, respondents leave virtually unanswered the appearance of impropriety that remains whenever litigants and lawyers receive a personal request for money from the person who is supposed to preside impartially over their cases. *Id.* at 6-8; Pet. 14-15. They leave unanswered what conceivable First Amendment value is served by having the judge rather than the campaign committee make a request for money, other than the (coercive) implication that the judge has

a personal interest in the contributions. *Stretton* v. *Disciplinary Bd.*, 944 F.2d 137, 146 (3d Cir. 1991). They offer no reason to think the standard here should be strict, rather than intermediate, scrutiny. See Pet. 26; Br. Former Chief Justices 5-7; Br. Concerned Corporations 17. And they ignore the fact that, notwithstanding the prohibition on disclosing the identity of donors, judges may learn (and litigants may fear that judges will learn) who did and did not contribute by a variety of means. See Br. State Amici 14 & n.10 (citing Pet. App. 84a) (Gibson, J., dissenting); Br. Concerned Corporations 19.

2. Respondents' attempt to prove the invalidity of partisan activities restrictions fares no better. Respondents do not seriously dispute that judicial candidates and judges may become or appear "'beholden' to political parties if they seek [the parties'] endorsement." Br. in Opp. 21; see Br. Concerned Corporations 9-10. Rather, they repeat the Eighth Circuit's assertion that Minnesota's restriction on partisan affiliation is "woefully underinclusive" because it addresses only party affiliation and not affiliation with special interest groups. Br. in Opp. 22. The Hatch Act upheld in *Letter Carriers*, however, operates in precisely the same fashion. The reason is simple: "Political parties have influence and power * * * that vastly exceeds that of any interest group." *McConnell* v. *Fed. Election Comm'n*, 540 U.S. 93, 188 (2002).

While respondents attempt to distinguish the Hatch Act on the ground that it applies only to employees, that distinction is unavailing. Like the provisions at issue here, the Hatch Act's prohibition on partisan activities does not address relationships with special interest groups apart from political parties. If the restrictions at issue here are fatally underinclusive for failure to address interest-group associations, the Hatch Act is fatally underinclusive as well.[3]

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[3] Respondents also err in asserting that Minnesota, by choosing to select judges by election, "assume[d] there will be controversial rivalries and policy differences * * * —and political party support of certain candidates is merely one expression of those differences." Br. in Opp. 18. Like many other States, Minnesota adopted elections to *prevent*

IV. The Court Should Hear This Case This Term

The need for this Court's review is not merely compelling—it is urgent. In 2006, 30 States will hold elections for their supreme courts. Absent prompt review, many States in the Eighth and Eleventh Circuits (including Minnesota) will endure elections, with lasting consequences, without the important protections of the judicial canons invalidated below. Outside those circuits, ethics enforcement officers with responsibilities for important elections will confront grave uncertainty over which rules they can enforce, and candidates will be left in the "untenable" position of either forgoing activities the Eighth and Eleventh Circuits have deemed constitutionally protected, or "violat[ing] [canons] that [may] ultimately [be] deemed constitutional and suffer[ing] * * * punishment" as a result. Br. ABA 9.

Petitioners therefore respectfully request that the Court not only grant the petition for a writ of certiorari, but that it also set the case for argument and decision this Term to the extent consistent with the Court's calendar. To that end, petitioners propose filing their opening brief 31 days after the Court acts on the petition rather than the 45 days allowed under this Court's Rule 25.1. That would place the case on the same schedule as cases granted on the Court's January 9, 2006 orders list, permit the full 35 days for the filing of respondents' brief under this Court's Rule 25.2, and allow time for reply under Rule 25.3 before the April argument session.

* * * * *

For the foregoing reasons and those stated in the petition, the petition for a writ of certiorari should be granted.

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partisan influence on the judiciary. Pet. 2; CCJ Br. 13-15; see Debates and Proceedings of the Minn. Const. Conv. 503 (St. Paul, Earle S. Goodrich, Territorial Printer 1857) (Del. Emmett) ("the people are much better qualified" to select judges because the "Governor always selects men belonging to his own political party, while the people often select them regardless of parties"); *id.* at 505-506 (Del. Flandrau) (because "the people" are not "politicians or partizans," popular ballot provides greater "safeguards" against partisanship). Minnesota adopted elections to minimize party influence on the judiciary—not expand it.

Respectfully submitted.

MIKE HATCH
Attorney General
State of Minnesota

KRISTINE L. EIDEN
Deputy Attorney General

THOMAS C. VASALY
Assistant Attorney General

445 Minnesota Street
Suite 1100
St. Paul, MN 55101-2128
(651) 296-6752

THOMAS R. PHILLIPS
Counsel of Record
BAKER BOTTS L.L.P.
1500 San Jacinto Center
98 San Jacinto Boulevard
Austin, TX 78701-4039
(512) 322-2500

JEFFREY A. LAMKEN
MICHAEL G. PATTILLO, JR.
JACOB A. SOMMER
BAKER BOTTS L.L.P.
1299 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20004-2400
(202) 639-7700

Counsel for Petitioners

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In The Supreme Court of the United States

MARTHA HOLTON DIMICK, CHAIRPERSON, MINNESOTA BOARD ON JUDICIAL STANDARDS, *et al.*,

Petitioners,

v.

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, *et al.*,

Respondents.

On Petition For A Writ Of *Certiorari* To The United States Court Of Appeals For The Eighth Circuit

BRIEF OF *AMICUS CURIAE* THE AMERICAN JUDICATURE SOCIETY IN SUPPORT OF THE PETITION FOR A WRIT OF *CERTIORARI*

ALLAN D. SOBEL
President
CYNTHIA GRAY
Director, Center for Judicial Ethics
American Judicature Society
The Opperman Center at Drake University
2700 University Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50311
(515) 271-2281

JOHN L. HILL, JR.
Counsel of Record
CRAIG T. ENOCH
WILLIAM G. ARNOT III
JUSTIN PRESNAL
WINSTEAD SECHREST & MINICK P.C.
2400 Bank One Center
910 Travis Street
Houston, Texas 77002
(713) 650-8400

Counsel for Amicus Curiae The American Judicature Society

COCKLE LAW BRIEF PRINTING CO. (800) 225-6964
OR CALL COLLECT (402) 342-2831

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BRIEF OF THE AMERICAN JUDICATURE SOCIETY AS *AMICUS CURIAE* IN SUPPORT OF THE PETITION FOR *CERTIORARI*

This *amicus curiae* brief is submitted on behalf of the American Judicature Society.[1] Petitioners and Respondents have consented to the filing of this brief. The correspondence regarding the American Judicature Society's requests for consent have been filed in the office of the Clerk.

I. INTEREST OF *AMICUS CURIAE* THE AMERICAN JUDICATURE SOCIETY

Founded in 1913, the American Judicature Society ("AJS") is a national, nonpartisan organization with members from every state who are judges, lawyers, and lay people dedicated to improving the administration of justice. A nonprofit corporation, it is funded through members' dues, contributions, and grant funds for special projects. For 92 years, AJS has spoken with a credible and independent voice on administration of justice issues and has demonstrated a continuing commitment to high ethical standards for judges and judicial candidates.

AJS's interest as *amicus curiae* in this case arises from its involvement and expertise in judicial selection, ethics, and independence. AJS's work in all three areas

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[1] None of the parties to this case had any role in writing this brief and no one other than AJS counsel made a monetary contribution to the preparation or submission of this brief. As a matter of policy and procedure, no judicial member of AJS participated in the decision to file this brief or in its preparation. No inference should be drawn that any judge member of AJS's board of directors has participated in the adoption or endorsement of the positions of this brief.

provides a unique, national perspective on the impact of the decision below.

From its founding, AJS has been a consistent voice in favor of reform of the process of judicial selection to ensure a bench of the highest quality. Since 1991, AJS has conducted its programs and activities in this area through the Elmo B. Hunter Citizens Center for Judicial Selection. For much of its existence, AJS has been a proponent of merit selection of judges, that is, selecting judges through a bi-partisan appointment process followed by a nonpartisan retention election,[2] rather than in political contests.

While continuing to favor merit selection, AJS has sought improvements of elective systems in recent years. Because some voters are reluctant to give up the accountability of elective systems, AJS realized that it should no longer ignore opportunities to promote intermediate reforms that could immediately benefit the majority of citizens and judges. Moreover, "attack politics" have been imported into retention elections, making issues of campaign speech and fund-raising relevant even in merit selection states.

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[2] Although systems vary in particulars, in general, merit selection is a system in which a state establishes a bi-partisan nominating commission that includes members of the legal community as well as citizens. When a vacancy occurs on a court, interested individuals submit their applications to this nominating commission. After conducting interviews and assessing the qualifications of the applicants, the commission submits the names of the three to eight most qualified to the governor, who appoints one to the judgeship. Subsequently, the judge is periodically placed on the ballot without an opponent, and voters decide whether to retain the judge in office. Currently, 14 states use this method to appoint some or all of their judges.

Therefore, AJS is currently addressing both nonpartisan merit selection reforms and improving the process of elective systems, giving AJS a helpful perspective on the issues of campaign speech and fund-raising implicated by the decision below. For instance, the Hunter Center has compiled comprehensive information on judicial selection processes in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia and made it available on-line.[3] This website is the leading resource for information about the methods of selecting, retaining, and removing judges from the bench in each state and includes information about successful and failed reform efforts, the roles of political parties, interest groups, and professional organizations in judicial selection, and the diversity of the state courts. It is regularly cited by reference works, scholars, legal professionals, reform organizations, and the media.

AJS also brings together relevant stakeholders to discuss current, critical problems in judicial selection. AJS regularly collaborates with state and national organizations, including the National Center for State Courts, the American Bar Association, and state bar associations. Moreover, AJS's mid-year meeting, in February 2006, titled "Re-thinking Strategies for Judicial Selection Reform," will be a major national summit to discuss theoretical and practical issues relating to all types of judicial selection.

In 1997, AJS established the Center for Judicial Independence in response to an increase in unfair criticism of, and efforts to remove from the bench, judges who have issued unpopular rulings. Subsequently, in 2004, AJS

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[3] URL: http://www.ajs.org/js/

established the Task Force on Judicial Independence and Accountability. The Task Force has three goals: (1) to monitor developments bearing on judicial independence and accountability at the federal and state levels; (2) to respond to unwarranted attacks on the judiciary and to highly visible situations demonstrating a failure of judicial accountability; and (3) to sponsor programs and educate the public on the relevant issues.

AJS's involvement in judicial ethics also gives it an important perspective on the ramifications of the decision below. Through its Center for Judicial Ethics, AJS provides a forum for the exchange of information on judicial discipline and promotes the enforcement of judicial ethics standards. Advancing high standards of conduct in judicial election campaigns has always been one of the focuses of the Center because public confidence in a judge's decisions is based not only on what takes place on the bench but also on how the judge campaigned for the office. In 1990, AJS published two monographs on judicial election campaigns, and in 2000, it published a judicial ethics curriculum on communicating with voters.

Because of its historical and continuing commitment to high ethical standards for judges and judicial candidates, AJS has closely followed and been actively involved in developments across the country since this Court's decision in *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002). The Center for Judicial Ethics has tracked First Amendment challenges to canon restrictions based on *White*, followed cases in which judges have been disciplined for campaign violations, and surveyed changes to codes of judicial conduct prompted by *White*. The Center

has posted a document describing the developments following the decision on its web-site,[4] with new developments added as they occur. In addition, the implications of both this Court's decision and the decision below will be discussed at AJS's mid-year meeting in February 2006.

Because of its national perspective on judicial selection, ethics, and independence and on the importance of the *White* decision, AJS respectfully requests that this Court consider the following arguments in support of the petition for a writ of *certiorari* to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit in *Dimick v. Republican Party of Minnesota*, No. 05-506.[5]

II. SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

Federal and state courts throughout the country are analyzing the extent and effect of this Court's decision in *White*. Though that decision was limited to the constitutionality of Minnesota's "announce clause," many other types of restrictions on judicial conduct are being examined (including "partisan activity" and "solicitation" clauses similar to those under consideration here), often with widely varying results. The writ of *certiorari* should be granted so that this Court can provide necessary guidance to lower courts by more fully defining the constitutional boundaries of judicial campaign regulation.

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[4] URL: http://www.ajs.org/ethics/pdfs/DevelopmentsafterWhite.pdf

[5] If this Court grants the petition for a writ of *certiorari*, AJS anticipates seeking to file a longer brief on the merits, elaborating the reasons why the decision below was not required by this Court's decision in *White* and the respects in which the Eighth Circuit's decision subordinates compelling state interests.

III. ARGUMENT

The Petition for a Writ of *Certiorari* Should Be Granted to Address the Uncertainty That Exists in State and Federal Courts Regarding Regulation of Judicial Elections.

If left standing, the decision below would have repercussions beyond Minnesota. The Eighth Circuit held unconstitutional clauses in the Minnesota code of judicial conduct (1) prohibiting judges or judicial candidates from identifying themselves as members of a political organization, attending political gatherings, and seeking, accepting, or using endorsements from a political organization and (2) prohibiting judicial candidates from personally soliciting campaign contributions from large groups and transmitting solicitations above their personal signatures (the extent of the plaintiffs' challenge). *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 416 F.3d 738 (8th Cir. 2005). At least 17 states (including Minnesota) have chosen to select their judges through nonpartisan elections, and the decision raises doubts about the constitutionality of that choice and any efforts states may make to reflect that choice in the code of judicial conduct. Of the 41 states that have some type of election for judges, 30 (including Minnesota) prohibit personal solicitation of contributions by the candidate. Most states, regardless of how they choose their judges, restrict judges, if not candidates, from attending political gatherings.

The effects of the decision below are already being felt. On December 1, 2005, based on the decision, the South Dakota Supreme Court amended that state's code of judicial conduct to allow a judge or candidate to identify himself or herself as a member of a political party at any time despite a statutory requirement that judicial elections be nonpartisan.

Moreover, the South Dakota code now expressly allows a candidate to personally solicit campaign contributions and does not even include any of the limitations on solicitation contained in the decision below. Further, the amendments lifted the prohibitions on acting as a leader in a political organization, attending political gatherings, paying an assessment to or making a contribution to a political organization or candidate, and purchasing tickets for political party dinners or other functions. *In the Matter of the Amendment of SDCL Chapter 16-2 Appendix; SDCL Chapter 16-1A Appendix; and Repeal of SDCL Chapter 12-9*, Rule 05-3 (S.D. December 1, 2005).[6]

In *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002), this Court held that states cannot, consistently with the First Amendment, prohibit judicial candidates from announcing their views on disputed legal and political issues. That holding directly affected only the nine states that had the "announce clause" in their codes of judicial conduct on the date the decision was issued.

United States Supreme Court decisions on judicial ethics are very rare, however, and the Court's analysis included extensive discussions of the principle of judicial impartiality and the role of the judge. Therefore, in the three and a half years since the decision, state supreme courts, judges, lawyers, and others in all 50 states have carefully parsed the Court's majority opinion, two concurring opinions, and two dissenting opinions to try to forecast what the Court would do if presented with a host of other challenges to the code of judicial conduct. The decision below is only one example of lower courts' application of

[6] URL: http://www.sdjudicial.com/downloads/sc/rules/y2005/r0513.pdf.

this Court's reasoning in *White* to a variety of issues arising in judicial codes of conduct.

Notably, state supreme courts (which are responsible for adopting the codes of conduct for judges and judicial candidates) have adopted conflicting interpretations of this Court's decision. Relying on this Court's statements in *White* that it was not addressing the constitutionality of the "pledges and promises clause" or the "commit clause" adopted in many states,[7] the Supreme Court of Florida and the New York Court of Appeals have upheld the constitutionality of those provisions and disciplined candidates for violating them by using pro-prosecution rhetoric during a campaign. *Inquiry Concerning Kinsey*, 842 So.2d 77 (Fla.), *cert. denied*, 540 U.S. 825 (2003); *In the Matter of Watson*, 794 N.E.2d 1 (N.Y. 2003). The court in *Kinsey*, for example, held that "it is beyond dispute" that the clauses serve a compelling state interest in preserving the integrity of our judiciary and maintaining the public's confidence in an impartial judiciary.

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[7] The American Bar Association Model Code of Judicial Conduct contains provisions that prohibit judicial candidates from making "pledges or promises of conduct in office other than the faithful and impartial performance of the duties of the office" and "statements that commit or appear to commit the candidate with respect to cases, controversies or issues that are likely to come before the court." Model Code of Judicial Conduct Canon 5A(3)(d)(i) and (ii) (1990). Those provisions, particularly the pledges and promises clause, have been adopted in many states. In its decision, this Court noted the pledges and promises clause was not challenged in the case and that it was not expressing a view on its constitutionality. *White*, 536 U.S. at 770. With respect to the commit clause, this Court stated, "no aspect of our constitutional analysis turns on" the question whether the announce clause and commit clause are the same. *Id.* at 773 n.5.

> A judicial candidate should not be encouraged to believe that the candidate can be elected to office by promising to act in a partisan manner by favoring a discrete group or class of citizens. Likewise, it would be inconsistent with our system of government if a judicial candidate could campaign on a platform that he or she would automatically give more credence to the testimony of certain witnesses or rule in a predetermined manner in a case which was heading to court.

842 So.2d at 87. The court also held that the restraints were narrowly tailored to protect the state's compelling interests without unnecessarily prohibiting protected speech, noting that "a candidate may state his or her personal views, even on disputed issues" but that "to ensure that the voters understand a judge's duty to uphold the constitution and laws of the state where the law differs from his or her personal belief, the commentary encourages candidates to stress that as judges, they will uphold the law." *Id.*

In contrast, the North Carolina Supreme Court apparently considered the pledges and promises clause suspect and, without awaiting a constitutional challenge, eliminated it from the state's code (which never had the commit clause), leaving intentional misrepresentations as the only restriction on judicial campaign speech in the state. *See N.C. Rules of Court, Code of Judicial Conduct*, Canon 7C(3). Federal courts have declared the pledges and promises clause and commit clause unconstitutional at least insofar as they might be construed to prohibit a judicial candidate from answering questions about the candidate's views of legal or political issues. *See Alaska Right to Life Political Action Comm. v. Feldman*, 380 F. Supp. 2d 1080 (D. Alaska 2005), *appeal filed*; *Family*

Trust Found. of Kentucky v. Wolnitzek, 345 F. Supp. 2d 672 (E.D. Ky. 2004); *North Dakota Family Alliance v. Bader*, 361 F. Supp. 2d 1021 (D. N.D. 2005).

In addition, the North Carolina Supreme Court, presumably acting from similar apprehension about the reach of *White*, has not only eliminated the canon that prohibited judicial candidates from personally soliciting campaign funds, but now expressly allows a judicial candidate to "personally solicit campaign funds and request public support from anyone for his own campaign." *See N.C. Rules of Court, Code of Judicial Conduct*, Canon 7B(4). Relying on this change, a trial court judge in North Carolina construed the court's permission to personally solicit funds as permission to campaign in the courthouse. During a recess of a session of court over which he was presiding, he called the assistant district attorney who was prosecuting the docket on behalf of the state into his chambers and requested that the attorney support and endorse him in the 2004 election in which the judge was a candidate for re-election. Although it strongly disapproved of the judge's action, the North Carolina Judicial Standards Commission felt constrained to dismiss the charges against him. *In re Graham*, Order (N.C. Judicial Standards Comm'n October 2005).

North Carolina's decision to eliminate the personal solicitation clause is consistent with the decision below and with *Weaver v. Bonner*, 309 F.3d 1312 (11th Cir. 2002). Despite this Court's explicit statement that it was "neither assert[ing] nor imply[ing] that the First Amendment requires campaigns for judicial office to sound the same as those for legislative office" (*White*, 536 U.S. at 783), in *Weaver*, the Eleventh Circuit stated that "the Supreme Court's decision in *White* suggests that the standard for

judicial elections should be the same as the standard for legislative and executive elections." 309 F.3d at 1321. The court held unconstitutional the Georgia code of judicial conduct's prohibition on judicial candidates using:

> "any form of public communication which the candidate knows or reasonably should know is false, fraudulent, misleading, deceptive, or which contains a material misrepresentation of fact or law or omits a fact necessary to make the communication considered as a whole not materially misleading or which is likely to create an unjustified expectation about results the candidate can achieve."

Id. at 1319.

The court also held that the solicitation clause fails strict scrutiny because it completely chills a candidate from speaking to potential contributors and endorsers about their potential contributions and endorsements "while hardly advancing the state's interest in judicial impartiality at all." *Id.* at 1322.

By contrast, the New York Court of Appeals has upheld code restrictions on activities such as participating in other candidates' campaigns, publicly endorsing other candidates or publicly opposing any candidate other than an opponent for judicial office, making speeches on behalf of political organizations or other candidates, or making contributions to political organizations. *In the Matter of Raab*, 793 N.E.2d 1287 (N.Y. 2003). Distinguishing this Court's decision in *White*, the court concluded:

> The political activity rules are carefully designed to alleviate [the concern that the public, including litigants and the bar, might perceive judges

> as beholden to a particular political leader or party] . . . by limiting the degree of involvement of judicial candidates in political activities during the critical time frame when the public's attention is focused on their activities, without unduly burdening the candidates' ability to participate in their own campaigns.

793 N.E.2d at 1293. *See also In re Dunleavy*, 838 A.2d 338 (Me. 2003), *cert. denied*, 541 U.S. 960 (2004) (upholding prohibitions on sitting judges soliciting support for political candidates and political organizations and purchasing tickets to political dinners or functions).

A federal judge in New York, however, accepted an argument that, under the decision in *White*, a state judicial conduct commission could not, consistently with the First Amendment, apply the canons to sanction a judge for participating in a demonstration at a Florida board of elections during the 2000 presidential election recount, engaging in fundraising for the county conservative party, and making payments to politicians whose party endorsements he sought. *Spargo v. New York State Comm'n on Judicial Conduct*, 244 F. Supp. 2d 72 (N.D.N.Y. 2003). This decision was vacated on abstention grounds. *Spargo v. State Comm'n on Judicial Conduct*, 351 F.3d 65 (2nd Cir. 2003), *cert. denied*, 541 U.S. 1085 (2004). In subsequent state court proceedings, the New York Supreme Court Appellate Division upheld the dismissal of the judge's application to prohibit the State Commission on Judicial Conduct from enforcing provisions of the code of judicial conduct restricting campaign and political conduct. *Spargo v. New York State Comm'n on Judicial Conduct*, 803 N.Y.S.2d 742 (N.Y. App. Div. 2005).

Furthermore, the *White* decision has prompted challenges and speculation beyond the canons related to campaign and political conduct. The attorney for some of the plaintiffs in *White*, for example, has argued that the rule requiring disqualification when a judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned is unconstitutional if applied to statements made during a campaign despite Justice Kennedy's statement in his concurring opinion in *White* that adopting strict standards of disqualification is one of the less restrictive alternatives to the announce clause that states may adopt. 536 U.S. at 783 (Kennedy, J. concurring). So far, federal courts have rejected this argument. *See Alaska Right to Life Political Action Comm. v. Feldman*, 380 F. Supp. 2d 1080 (D. Alaska 2005), *appeal filed*; *Family Trust Found. of Kentucky v. Wolnitzek*, 345 F. Supp. 2d 672 (E.D. Ky. 2004); *North Dakota Family Alliance v. Bader*, 361 F. Supp. 2d 1021 (D. N.D. 2005).

Some judges and experts (and news reporters) have even argued that the *White* decision should be a catalyst for relaxing the prohibition on commenting on pending cases, which has been adopted in every state and the *Code of Conduct for U.S. Judges*. *See, e.g.*, Thomas Penfield Jackson, "*Beyond* Republican Party v. White: *A Plea for Rule of Reason for Extrajudicial Speech*," 32 HOFSTRA L. REV. 1163 (2004). A California judge recently invoked this Court's holding in *White* to defend himself in a discipline case based on his comments about a juvenile case pending before him on a public television program. (The Commission on Judicial Performance rejected the argument.

Inquiry Concerning Ross, Decision and Order (Cal. Comm'n on Judicial Performance November 16, 2005)).[8]

Relying on this Court's decision, a judicial ethics advisory committee in Vermont, a state in which all judges are appointed, issued an opinion allowing judges to participate in a peace march, hold an anti-war sign, and sign a petition to the congressional delegation or the town board on issues such as energy independence and funding for a local anti-poverty agency. *Vermont Advisory Opinion 2827-6* (2003).[9] The committee stated it "must . . . apply strict scrutiny to an application of the Code which would restrict the free speech rights of a Vermont judge." *Id.*

Finally, interest groups and commentators have used the decision in *White* to pressure nominees to this Court to answer questions during the Senate confirmation process that have traditionally been considered inappropriate and irrelevant, arguing that the logic of the decision applies, not just to election campaigns, but also to the appointive process.

Some of the confusion about the logical reach of the holding in *White* is evident in the decision below. For example, the majority's statement that "[t]his case . . . is not about what happens after an election" (416 F.3d at 753) is clearly inconsistent with this Court's decision in *White*. Although this Court did not accept the argument that the announce clause was necessary to protect the state's interest in judicial impartiality, its analysis clearly

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[8] URL: http://cjp.ca.gov/pressrel.htm

[9] URL: http://www.vermontjudiciary.org/Committes/boards/vtjudethicsadcomm.htm

accepted "what happens after an election" as the relevant focus.

The independence, impartiality, and integrity of state judges is being assailed from many directions. Articulation and implementation of high ethical standards is one of the few safeguards against such attacks available to state supreme courts. The confusion that has arisen since this Court's decision in *White* undermines the judiciary's ability to maintain public confidence in the courts in the face of unfair criticism. Therefore, the American Judicature Society respectfully requests that this Court grant the writ of *certiorari* to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit in *Dimick v. Republican Party of Minnesota*, No. 05-506.

IV. CONCLUSION

As argued by the Petitioners, and supported by the foregoing additional reasons, the petition for a writ of *certiorari* should be granted.

Respectfully submitted,

JOHN L. HILL, JR.
Counsel of Record
CRAIG T. ENOCH
WILLIAM G. ARNOT III
JUSTIN PRESNAL
WINSTEAD SECHREST & MINICK P.C.
2400 Bank One Center
910 Travis Street
Houston, Texas 77002
(713) 650-2723

ALLAN D. SOBEL
President
CYNTHIA GRAY
Director, Center for Judicial Ethics
American Judicature Society
The Opperman Center at Drake University
2700 University Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50311
(515) 271-2281

Counsel for Amicus Curiae
The American Judicature Society

(10)

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IN THE
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

MARTHA HOLTON DIMICK, CHAIRPERSON, MINNESOTA BOARD OF JUDICIAL STANDARDS, et al.,

Petitioners,

v.

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, et al.,

Respondents.

On Writ Of Certiorari
To The United States Court of Appeals
for the Eighth Circuit

BRIEF OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI AND THE MISSOURI JUDICIAL CONFERENCE AS AMICI CURIAE IN SUPPORT OF PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI

JEREMIAH W. (JAY) NIXON
Attorney General
JAMES R. LAYTON
State Solicitor
Counsel of Record
P.O. Box 899
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0899
Tel: (573) 751-3321
Fax: (573) 751-0774
Attorneys for Amici

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INTEREST OF AMICI

Missouri has a long history of trying to minimize the impact of partisanship in its judiciary. More than 60 years ago, the State of Missouri adopted the "Missouri Nonpartisan Court Plan," providing for merit selection and nonpartisan "retention" elections for many of its judges. Extending protection against excessive partisan influence in the judiciary beyond the Missouri Plan, the Missouri Supreme Court, authorized to regulate judicial behavior, has adopted a canon, like Minnesota's, that bars judges from personally soliciting and receiving campaign contributions. The voters and the Missouri General Assembly have also taken steps in that direction, imposing by constitutional and statutory decree limitations on the partisan political activity of judges and candidates for judgeships.

Missouri has also had a role in the development of the law that the Eighth Circuit should have applied. In 1991, the State's choices regarding judicial retirement prompted one of this Court's most significant federalism decisions. Later in the same decade, the State assisted in the development of First Amendment jurisprudence in the campaign finance context, bringing a critical question to this Court regarding limitations on campaign contributions – limitations that are intended to attack the reality and appearance of corruption, just as the regulations at issue here are intended to attack the reality and appearance of judicial partisanship.

The Missouri Judicial Conference consists of all the State's judges. Mo. Rev. Stat. § 476.320 (2000). The State and its Judicial Conference have an interest in maintaining the integrity and independence of the Missouri judiciary – both those who are appointed pursuant to the "Missouri Plan," and those who are elected. And they have an interest in preserving

the authority of the State – whether by the people in its constitution, by the legislature in its statutes, or by the Missouri Supreme Court in judicial canons – to take the steps necessary to ensure a fair judiciary in the form best suited to the needs of Missourians.

ARGUMENT

1. In a significant Missouri case decided nearly 15 years ago, this Court recognized that the states have and must be allowed to exercise their sovereign authority in determining many aspects of the nature and structure of their government – including their judiciaries. *Gregory v. Ashcroft*, 501 U.S. 452 (1991), presented a challenge based on the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), 29 U.S.C. §§ 621-634. The Court began its analysis with the reiteration of a basic principle of federalism – a principle that the Eighth Circuit seems determined to ignore:

> As every schoolchild learns, our Constitution establishes a system of dual sovereignty between the States and the Federal Government. This Court also has recognized this fundamental principle. In *Tafflin v. Levitt*, 493 U.S. 455, 458 (1990), "[w]e beg[a]n with the axiom that, under our federal system, the States possess sovereignty concurrent with that of the Federal Government, subject only to limitations imposed by the Supremacy Clause." More than 120 years ago, the Court described the constitutional scheme of dual sovereigns:
>
> "'[T]he people of each State compose a State, having its own government, and endowed with all the functions essential to separate and

independent existence.'"...

501 U.S. at 457, quoting *Texas v. White*, 7 Wall. 700, 725 (1869), in turn quoting *Lane County v. Oregon*, 7 Wall. 71, 76 (1869). In *Gregory*, the Court went on to "acknowledge[] the unique nature of state decisions that 'go to the heart of representative government.'" 501 U.S. at 461, quoting *Sugarman v. Dougall*, 413 U.S. 634, 647 (1973).

The state decision at issue in *Gregory* was one regarding the qualifications of judges. The Missouri Constitution requires, "All judges other than municipal judges shall retire at the age of seventy years . . .." Mo. Const. Art. V, § 26. The Court explained that such decisions regarding the qualifications of judges go to the essence of state sovereignty:

> This provision goes beyond an area traditionally regulated by the States; it is a decision of the most fundamental sort for a sovereign entity. Through the structure of its government, and the character of those who exercise government authority, a State defines itself as a sovereign. "It is obviously essential to the independence of the States, and to their peace and tranquility, that their power to prescribe the qualifications of their own officers . . . should be exclusive, except so far as plainly provided by the Constitution of the United States."

501 U.S. at 460, quoting *Taylor v. Beckham*, 178 U.S. 548 (1900). Then the Court cited with approval this declaration from *Boyd v. Nebraska ex rel. Thayer*, 143 U.S. 135, 161 (1892): "Each State has the power to prescribe the qualifications of its officers and the manner in which they shall be chosen." 501 U.S. at 462.

2. If Missouri's decision to impose a mandatory

retirement age on judges went to the heart of representative government, then the matters at issue here certainly do. The respondents and the Eighth Circuit, as did the plaintiffs in *Gregory v. Ashcroft*, attack decisions that are unarguably "of the most fundamental sort for a sovereign entity": "the manner in which [its judges] shall be chosen."

Missouri's most famous manner of choosing judges is the "Missouri Nonpartisan Court Plan," now found in Article V, § 25 of the Missouri Constitution. That plan was adopted by Missouri voters by initiative in November 1940 as a popular response to the power of partisan political machines in Kansas City and St. Louis.

The Missouri Plan rejected the concept that there was an all or nothing choice – appointment v. popular election – both of which Missouri had tried at various times in its history. The new plan was a hybrid, designed to reduce the opportunity for partisan bias but to retain popular involvement. The plan creates a commission, with some members appointed by the Governor and others elected by the Bar, all with staggered six-year terms and all prohibited, while in office, from holding "any official position in a political party." Mo. Const. Art. V, § 25(d); Mo. Sup. Ct. Rule 10.03. The commission nominates three individuals to the Governor; the Governor then chooses one of the three. Mo. Const. Art. V, § 25(a). New judges must then stand in "retention elections," first at the general election after they have been in office for 12 months, then at the end of each term. Mo. Const. Art. V, § 25(c)(1).

In *White*, Justice O'Connor contrasted the Minnesota approach with the Missouri Plan: "Minnesota has chosen to select its judges through contested popular elections instead of through an appointment system or a combined appointment and retention election system along the lines of the Missouri plan." *White v. Minnesota*, 536 U.S. 765, 792 (2002) (O'Connor, J.

concurring). Justice O'Connor said that Minnesota was "largely" to blame for any "problem with judicial impartiality" because it chose popular elections, rather than an appointment system (*i.e.*, the federal model) or the Missouri Plan. *Id.*

Missouri's efforts to restrain partisanship do not end, of course, with the selection and retention process. To ensure nonpartisanship, the judges chosen under the Missouri Plan are subsequently barred from most partisan activity:

> No judge . . . appointed to or retained in office in the manner prescribed in sections 25(a)-(g), shall directly or indirectly make any contribution to or hold any office in a political party or organization, or take part in any political campaign.

Mo. Const. Art. V, § 25(f).

The Missouri Plan does not yet extend to all Missouri judges. By constitutional decree, it is used to select and retain all appellate judges, as well as judges in what were, at the time of its adoption, by far the most populous jurisdictions: Jackson County and the City of St. Louis.[1] Since that time, the Plan has been extended to other counties.[2] But the remaining counties, many of which have modest populations, elect their trial court judges.[3]

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[1] The 1940 Census showed the City of St. Louis with 816,048 residents, and Jackson County, which contains most of the City of Kansas City, with 477,828. The next most populous jurisdiction was St. Louis County, with 274,230 residents.

[2] St. Louis County joined the plan in 1970. Clay and Platte counties, in suburban Kansas City, joined in 1973.

[3] Of the 155 Missouri counties (the City of St. Louis is treated as its own county), more than half have a population of less than 20,000.

Missouri has made fundamental choices about the qualifications and manner of selection of elected judges that distinguish those judges, too, from officers in other branches of government. Most notably, the Missouri Constitution sets judges apart by giving them longer terms – 6 years – than any other elected officials. Mo. Const. Art. V, § 19. Unique among Missouri elected officials, judges are required to have a particular professional qualification – that they be licensed to practice law. Mo. Const. Art. V, § 21. And they are subject to an entirely different system for removal and retirement. Mo. Const. Art. V, § 24.

Missouri's statutes, like its constitution, often treat judges differently than other officers. For example, judges are barred from practicing their profession, Mo. Rev. Stat. §§ 476.290, 478.013.2 (2000), a restriction applied only to one other high-level appointee, *see* Mo. Rev. Stat. § 630.025.1 (2000) (Director, Mo. Dept. of Mental Health). And aithough Missouri has conflict of interest statutes for public officials generally, *see* Mo. Rev. Stat. Chapter 105 (2000), it imposes additional requirements on judges, Mo. Rev. Stat. § 476.800 (2000).

Like their peers in all states and in the federal system, Missouri's judges are tasked with adjudication, and expected to perform that task without partisan influence. But having created a less-political branch, Missouri has taken advantage of the absence of partisanship to assign that branch a nonjudicial but most politically sensitive responsibility: redrawing legislative districts following the decennial census when a bipartisan citizens' committee fails to do so. *See* Mo. Const.

Voting age population reaches a low of 1805 in Worth County. (Data from the 2000 Census is available at www.census.gov.) Each county elects its own associate circuit judge. Mo. Const. Art. V, § 16.

Art. III, §§ 2, 6. Thus in 2001, a panel of appellate judges established the districts for the Missouri House of Representatives and Senate. Partisanship would defeat the very purpose of having a nonpartisan judicial panel act when a bipartisan citizens' commission fails to do so.

3. The Eighth Circuit never addresses the impact of state sovereignty, and mentions *Gregory v. Ashcroft* almost in passing, blithely distinguishing it by saying that this case, unlike that one, involves free speech. *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 416 F.3d 738, 749 (8th Cir. 2005) (en banc). The Eighth Circuit concludes that because of the free-speech implications of the Minnesota canon, it must give the state's choice "strict scrutiny," regardless of any impact on state sovereignty. In making that leap, the Eighth Circuit belittles not just *Gregory*, but another line of cases that includes one coming from the State of Missouri. Though those cases, too, address this "area of the most fundamental First Amendment activit[y]," *Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1, 14 (1976), they are inconsistent with a fundamental step in the Eighth Circuit's analysis.

In *Buckley* this Court rejected the claim that everyone has an "absolute" right to support candidates as they wish. *Id.* at 23. And it held that "preserving the integrity of our system of representative democracy" and fighting "the appearance of corruption" were compelling state interests that can be served by restricting campaign contributions.

Missouri entered the fray in *Nixon v. Shrink Missouri Government PAC*, 528 U.S. 377, 400 (2000), where this Court upheld Missouri's choice to impose limits on contributions to candidate committees (including committees for judges). Later, the Eighth Circuit struck down Missouri's limits on political party contributions – but reversed itself after this Court sent the case back for consideration in light of *Federal*

Election Comm'n v. Colorado Republican Federal Campaign Comm., 533 U.S. 431 (2001). *Missouri Republican Party v. Lamb*, 227 F.3d 1070 (8th Cir. 2000), cert. granted and opinion vacated sub nom. *Nixon v. Missouri Republican Party*, 533 U.S. 945 (2001) (mem.); on remand, *Nixon v. Missouri Republican Party*, 270 F.3d 567 (8th Cir. 2001).

Here, the Eighth Circuit cites *Buckley* merely for its broad statements about the value of political speech. *See Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 416 F.3d at 748. It addresses *Shrink Missouri Government* and this Court's most recent precedent, *McConnell v. FEC*, 540 U.S. 93 (2003), only in a footnote answering an argument made by the dissent. 416 F.3d at 756 n. 8.

The superficiality of the Eighth Circuit's analysis is evident in that footnote. The majority holds (*id.* at 749) that Minnesota's solicitation clause is subject to full "strict scrutiny" – the sort that in the Eighth Circuit's application proves to be not just "strict in theory, but fatal in fact." *Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Pena*, 515 U.S. 200, 202 (1995). The Eighth Circuit majority expressly recognizes that in *McConnell*, *Shrink Missouri Government*, and *Buckley*, this "Court applied a 'less rigorous [than strict scrutiny] standard of review.'" 416 F.3d at 756 n. 8, quoting *McConnell*, 540 U.S. at 137. The majority feels no compulsion to defend its choice because "the dissent acknowledges that strict scrutiny applies." 416 F.3d at 756 n. 8. But as the Eighth Circuit admits, in *Buckley* and its progeny this Court did not blaze the "strict scrutiny" trail that the Eighth Circuit now follows.

The interests that Minnesota, Missouri, and other states are attempting to address through restrictions on the solicitation of contributions by judges and candidates for judgeships should be subject to the "less rigorous standard" of *Buckley* and its progeny. Those interests are in no respect less compelling than

the ones at issue in the contribution limits cases. Indeed, they may be greater, for an independent judiciary is the last check on the corruption that campaign contribution regulations are intended to attack. The inconsistency between the Eighth Circuit's treatment of the states' interests in protecting against the appearance and reality of judicial partiality and this Court's treatment of the states' interests in protecting against the appearance and reality of legislative and executive corruption merits review by this Court.

4. Missouri has concluded that it simply cannot afford, as a state, to have the public lose the perception that judges are above partisanship. Under the campaign contributions cases, that conclusion merits more deference than the Eighth Circuit was willing to give. And such deference is even more important where we are dealing with the kind of sovereignty choice at issue in *Gregory v. Ashcroft*.

Failure to give Missouri that kind of deference will have a significant adverse impact despite the State's famous choice to move away from elections as the exclusive method of judicial selection. As noted above, Justice O'Connor noted that movement in *White*, suggesting a line between "contested popular elections" on the one hand, and "an appointment system or a combined appointment and retention election system along the lines of the Missouri Plan" on the other. *White v. Minnesota*, 536 U.S. at 792 (O'Connor, J. concurring). But nothing in the Eighth Circuit's analysis suggests that it will reach a different result when it crosses that line and considers Missouri's "combined appointment and retention election system."

To the contrary, the Eighth Circuit's rationale leads implicitly but inexorably to the conclusion that once any state exercises its sovereignty to allow judicial elections, the State is compelled to treat those elections precisely as it treats elections

for executive and legislative branch positions. The Eighth Circuit concludes, in essence, that an election is an election, and that we should expect and must allow judicial candidates and their partisan supporters to speak and act just as candidates for the legislature. In effect, the choice left to the states by the Eighth Circuit significantly limits their ability to choose a judicial selection system with a different tone and feel. The Eighth Circuit would bar states from giving the public a say in judicial selection and retention without opening the campaign door completely. In other words, under the Eighth Circuit's rationale states are left with an "all or nothing" choice.

The Missouri Plan that Justice O'Connor correctly distinguished from open election systems is neither all nor nothing. Judges selected under that Plan need not stand for election at the time of appointment, but must stand for retention elections. Even retention elections can become heated. *See, e.g.*, Robert S. Thompson, "Judicial Retention Elections and Judicial Method: A Retrospective on the California Retention Election of 1986," 61 SO. CAL. L. REV., 2007 (1988); B. Michael Dann & Randall M. Hansen, "Judicial Retention Elections," 34 LOYOLA L.A. L. REV., 1429 (2001). And a heated election, even in a nonpartisan race, can quickly become – covertly or overtly – a vehicle for partisan warfare.

Missouri has recently experienced such an event. In 2004, there was a movement in opposition to the retention of Missouri Supreme Court Judge Richard Teitelman, who had been appointed by Governor Bob Holden, a Democrat. Though the effort was not overtly partisan, a prominent Republican legislative leader with a reputation for partisan advocacy was its most prominent leader.[4]

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[4]*See* "Campaign against state judge foreshadows legislative effort," Southeast Missourian, Nov. 17, 2004, viewed Dec. 30, 2005, at

To prevent its nonpartisan judicial appointment and retention system from becoming as partisan a battleground as "contested popular elections" may become,[5] Missouri needs the additional protection provided by restrictions on the movement of campaign money directly into judges' hands. Missouri's canon largely parallels Minnesota's. *See* Mo. Sup. Ct. Rule 2.03, Canon 5(B)(2). That canon may be more important in the

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http://www.semissourian.com/story.html$rec=150430; "Important Letter From Rep. Rod Jetton," viewed Dec. 30, 2005, at http://www.boonecountyrepublicans.com/jetton.htm.

[5] We do not suggest that partisan battles are common in judicial elections in Missouri, nor that such elections are decided on the basis of partisan affiliation, as some claim. *E.g.*, The Federalist Society Judicial Appointments White Paper Task Force, "The Case for Judicial Appointments" (2003), viewed Dec. 9, 2005, at http://www.fed-soc.org/Publications/White%20Papers/judicialappointments.htm. Partisan positioning in judicial races in Missouri is rare, as is evidence of party-line judicial selections. In fact, a comparison of results in contested 2004 elections for circuit judges in nonmetropolitan circuits with results in the hotly contested gubernatorial race that same year, using data available on the Missouri Secretary of State's website at http://www.sos.mo.gov/enrweb/, show dramatic differences between the totals for judicial candidates and gubernatorial candidates from the same party. For example, in the 25th Judicial Circuit, the Democratic candidate for circuit judge ran 17 percentage points ahead of the Democratic gubernatorial candidate in Phelps County, 12 points in Maries County, 10 points in Pulaski County, and 7 points in Texas County. By contrast, in the 26th Circuit, the Republican candidate for circuit judge ran 11 points ahead of the gubernatorial candidate in Laclede County, but behind the gubernatorial candidate in Camden County. Those differences belie the conclusion that "voters in partisan elections have no choice but to rely on party cues, thus linking selection to national or local partisan issues rather than qualifications or job performance." Judicial Selection White Paper, *supra*. Such claims ring particularly hollow in Missouri's least populous counties. *See* n. 3, *supra*.

judicial elections in counties that have not yet joined the Missouri Plan. But if this Court denies the petition, that canon will undoubtedly draw a challenge even as it applies to retention elections.

Missouri's choice to retain some element of popular voice in the judicial selection and retention process through that plan will then be subject to the Eighth Circuit's rule. Under that rule, Missouri may be unable to fully exercise its sovereign power to craft a judiciary in a model that makes sense to those closest to the people. Such an infringement on the sovereignty of Missouri and the six other Eighth Circuit states – and its potential application to the remaining 43, including dozens that have adopted the Missouri Plan – merits the attention of this Court.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated above, the Court should grant the petition for writ of certiorari.

Respectfully submitted,

JEREMIAH W. (JAY) NIXON
Attorney General
JAMES R. LAYTON
State Solicitor
Counsel of Record
P.O. Box 899
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0899
Tel: (573) 751-3321
Fax: (573) 751-0774

Attorneys for Respondents

No. 05-566

IN THE

Supreme Court of the United States

MARTHA HOLTON DIMICK, CHAIRPERSON, MINNESOTA BOARD ON JUDICIAL STANDARDS, *ET AL.*,
Petitioners,

v.

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, *ET AL.*,
Respondents.

On Petition for a Writ of Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit

BRIEF *AMICUS CURIAE* OF THE AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

Of Counsel:

RICHARD P. HOGAN, JR.
JENNIFER BRUCH HOGAN
MATTHEW E. COVELER

MICHAEL S. GRECO *
President
AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION
312 N. Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60610
(312) 988-5295

* Counsel of Record

WILSON-EPES PRINTING CO., INC. – (202) 789-0096 – WASHINGTON, D. C. 20001

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IN THE

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No. 05-566

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Respondents.

On Petition for a Writ of Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit

BRIEF *AMICUS CURIAE* OF THE AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

INTEREST OF THE *AMICUS CURIAE* [1]

With more than 400,000 members, the American Bar Association is the nation's leading representative of the legal profession.[2] Members of the ABA come from all 50 states, the

[1] Pursuant to Rule 37.6, *amicus curiae* certifies that no counsel for a party authored this brief in whole or in part and that no person or entity, other than *amicus*, its members, or its counsel, has made a monetary contribution to the preparation or submission of this brief. Pursuant to Rule 37.2(a), the parties have filed letters consenting to the filing of this brief with the Clerk of this Court.

[2] Neither this brief nor the decision to file this brief should be interpreted to reflect the views of any judicial member of the ABA. No mem-

District of Columbia, and the United States' territories. Its members include attorneys in private practice, government service, corporate law departments, and public interest organizations, as well as law professors, legislators, law students, and non-lawyer associates in related fields.

The ABA works to improve the administration of justice, promotes programs that assist lawyers and judges in their work, accredits law schools, provides continuing legal education, and works to build public understanding around the world of the importance of the rule of law in a democratic society. Its mission is to serve the public and the profession by promoting justice, professional excellence and respect for the law. Stated goals of the ABA include "preserv[ing] the independence of the legal profession and the judiciary as fundamental to a free society." ABA POLICY AND PROCEDURES HANDBOOK 2005-2006 (Goal XI).

The ABA is currently evaluating its judicial canons. On December 14, 2005, the ABA Commission to Evaluate the Model Code of Judicial Conduct released a final, complete draft of its proposed new canons and rules, including those addressing political activity. *See* ABA Joint Commission to Evaluate the Model Code of Judicial Conduct, *Final Draft Report*, http://www.abanet.org/judicialethics/finaldraftreport.html. The chair of the ABA Commission, inviting public comment to the draft, noted that "[t]he code must provide the guidance judges need, while also assuring a regulatory structure that reinforces the rectitude we expect from our judiciary." News Release, ABA, *ABA Releases Complete Final Draft of Revisions to Model Code of Judicial Conduct* (Dec. 21, 2005).

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ber of the Judicial Division Council has participated in the adoption or endorsement of the positions in this brief. This brief was not circulated to any member of the Judicial Division prior to filing.

The most substantial revisions to the Model Code involve Canon 5's provisions governing political activity of judges and judicial candidates. The ABA strives to ensure that the judiciary's integrity, independence, and impartiality are not undermined by inappropriate political activity. Particularly now, when the ABA's House of Delegates will consider the Commission's proposed, revised canons, this case interests the Association.

SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT

This Court should review the Eighth Circuit's *en banc* decision for two reasons:

First, the impact of *White* is uncertain. Judicial elections and the state codes modeled on the ABA canons will be in limbo without guidance from this Court. Issues concerning fundraising and political activities in judicial campaigns are likely to recur unless the Court intervenes.

Second, the proper scope of campaign regulations affecting judicial candidates and judges is important to the ABA and the public. The ABA's Model Code must both advance the goals of judicial independence, integrity, and impartiality and comport with this Court's guidance.

ARGUMENT

I. The Petition Raises Issues Of Nationwide Import.

Every state, and the federal judiciary, has adopted some set of judicial canons predicated on the ABA's model. *See generally* L. MILORD, THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ABA JUDICIAL CODE 7 (1992); M. Peter Moser, *The 1990 ABA Code of Judicial Conduct: A Model for the Future*, 4 GEO. J. LEGAL ETHICS 731, 731 n.3 (1991). Moreover, the preferred merit selection method for choosing judges notwithstanding, the ABA committee drafting the Model Code has for some time been "aware that the public election method was deeply

rooted in many jurisdictions and unlikely to change significantly in the near future." MILORD, *supra*, at 46. Accordingly, the ABA must confront the dual reality that (1) judicial-ethics codes modeled on ABA standards are in force everywhere there are judges in this country, and (2) many of those judges will be chosen in elections, where they must campaign for office.

In the face of *Republican Party of Minn. v. White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002), no state that follows the ABA model can be sure how to conduct an election, and no judicial candidate can know the boundaries of permissible campaign behavior. This Court's guidance is critical for the proper operation of judicial elections.

A. The Eighth Circuit's Ruling Calls into Question Portions of the Judicial Canons of 31 States Across the Nation.

The ABA's Canons of Judicial Ethics (1924), Code of Judicial Conduct (1972), and Model Code of Judicial Conduct (1990) serve as the basis for the states' and federal judiciary's codification of "basic standards which should govern the conduct of all judges." ABA MODEL CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT (1990) (Preamble). Since the ABA began its work on the creation of standards for ethical conduct of judges in 1922, every state in the union, along with the federal judiciary, has adopted some iteration (albeit with a variety of modifications) of the ABA's judicial ethics guidelines. *See generally* MILORD, *supra*, at 7; Moser, *supra*, at 731 n.3.

Specific to this case, 29 states have crafted a ban on judicial candidates' personal solicitation of campaign contributions like that reflected in Minnesota's Canon 5B(2).[3]

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[3] *See* ALASKA C[illegible]T RULES, CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5C(3) (West 2006); 17A ARIZ. REV. STAT. ANN., S. CT. R. 81, CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5B(3) (West 2005); ARK. CODE ANN., CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5C(2) (Lexis Nexis 2005); COLO. CT. RULES ANN., Ch.

Nine states with nonpartisan judicial elections include some limitation, like Minnesota Canon 5A(1), on political party activities.[4] In all, a total of 31 states have adopted one or both provisions similar to those at issue in the case below.

24, COLO. RULES OF JUD. DISCIPLINE, CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 7B(2)(d) (West 2005); FLA. STAT. ANN., CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 7C(1) (West 2005); IDAHO RULES OF COURT, CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5C(2) (West 2001); ILL. COMP. STAT. ANN., CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, S. Ct. R. 67, Canon 7B(2) (West 2005); IND. CODE ANN. tit. 34, CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5C(2) (West 2002); KAN. S. CT. R. 601A, Canon 5C(2) (West 2002); KY. REV. STAT. ANN., S. CT. R. 4.300, KY. CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5B(2) (West 2005); LA. REV. STAT. ANN., CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 7D(1) (West 2005); MICH. COMP. LAWS ANN., CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 7B(2)(a) (West 2005); MISS. RULES OF COURT, CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5C(2) (West 2005); MO. RULES OF COURT, CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5B(2) (West 2005); NEB. COURT RULES & PROC., CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5C(2) (West 2005); N.Y. JUDICIARY LAW, APP., N.Y. CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5A(5) (McKinney 2003); N.D. COURT RULES, CODE OF CONDUCT, Canon 5C(2) (West 2005); OHIO REV. CODE ANN., CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 7(c)(2)(a) (West 2005); OKLA. STAT. ANN., tit. 5, ch. 1, app. 4, CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5C(2) (West 2001 & Supp. 2005); OR. RULES OF COURT, CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, R. 4-102(D) (2005); PA. CONS. STAT. ANN., CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 7B(2) (West Supp. 2005); S.D. CODIFIED LAWS, ch. 12-16, APP., CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5C(2) (Lexis Nexis 2005); TENN. RULES OF COURT, S. CT. R. 10, CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5C(2)(a) (West 2005); UTAH CODE OF JUD. ADMIN., ch. 12, CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5C(2) (Lexis Nexis 2001); WASH. CT. RULES, CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 7B(2) (West 2000); W. VA. CODE ANN., STATE COURT RULES, CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5C(2) (Lexis Nexis 2004); WIS. CODE ANN. ch. 60, S. CT. R. 60.06(4) (West 2005); WYO. COURT RULES ANN., CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5C(2) (Lexis Nexis 2005).

[4] Nine states limit statements of party affiliation. ARK. CODE ANN., CODE OF JUD. CONDuct, 5A(1)(f) and 5C(1)(a)(iii) (Lexis Nexis 2005); FLA. STAT. ANN., CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 7C(3) (West 2005); KY. REV. STAT. ANN., S. CT. R. 4.300, KY. CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5A(2) (West 2005); MISS. CODE ANN. § 23-15-973 (West 2005); NEV. REV. STAT. ANN., S. CT. RULES, Part VI, NEV. CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5C(1)(ii) (West 2000 & Supp. 2005); OR. RULES OF

Because many other states have adopted provisions like those of Minnesota, the Eighth Circuit's ruling impacts not only Minnesota's judiciary and judicial candidates, but 30 other states across the nation as well. This far-reaching effect justifies this Court's review of the issues raised. *See, e.g., New York v. Ferber*, 458 U.S. 747, 749 n.2 (1982) (noting that the provisions of New York's child pornography statute before the Court had identical or similar analogs in federal statutes and the statutes of 46 other states); *New York v. O'Neill*, 359 U.S. 1, 3 (1959) ("We granted certiorari [citation omitted] inasmuch as this holding brings into question the constitutionality of a statute now in force in forty-two States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico."); *Nixon v. Shrink Mo. Gov't PAC*, 528 U.S. 377, 385 (2000) ("Given the large number of States that limit political contributions [citation omitted], we granted certiorari . . . ."). Without this Court's review, provisions of the judicial canons of 31 states will be called into question.

B. Unsettled Questions in the Lower Courts Will Cloud the Conduct of Judicial Elections.

At the time of the Court's opinion in *White*, a significant number of cases in the lower courts had attempted to address limits on conduct by candidates for judicial office.[5] These

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COURT, CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, R. 4-102(C) (2005); S.D. CODIFIED LAWS, ch. 12-16, APP., CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5C(1)(a)(ii) (Lexis Nexis 2005); WASH. CT. RULES, CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 7(A)(1)(e) (West 2000); WIS. CODE ANN., ch. 60, S. CT. R. 60.06(2)(b) (West 2005). Two states allow speaking at party gatherings if the candidate's opponent is also invited to speak. ARK. CODE. ANN., CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5C(1); FLA. STAT. ANN., CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 7C(3). Three States prohibit seeking party endorsement. ARK. CODE. ANN., CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5A(1)(d); IDAHO RULES OF COURT, CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT, Canon 5A(1)(d) (West 2001); MISS. CODE ANN. § 23-15-973.

[5] *See, e.g., Morial v. Judiciary Comm'n*, 565 F.2d 295, 306-07 (5th Cir. 1977) (upholding constitutionality of provisions of Louisiana statute and

inconsistent rulings failed to provide a framework for evaluating the constitutionality of the states' judicial canons.

Following on the heels of *White*, lower courts have continued their struggle to strike a balance between First Amend-

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Code of Judicial Ethics requiring judges to resign from bench prior to running for elective non-judicial offices); *Weaver v. Bonner*, 114 F. Supp. 2d 1337, 1341-43 (N.D. Ga. 2000), *aff'd in part, rev'd in part*, 309 F.3d 1312 (11th Cir. 2002) (declaring provision of Georgia Code of Judicial Conduct prohibiting false statements to be unconstitutional); *Zeller v. Fla. Bar*, 909 F. Supp. 1518, 1529 (N.D. Fla. 1995) (granting preliminary injunction enjoining enforcement of provisions of Florida Code of Judicial Conduct regulating expenditure and solicitation of judicial campaign funds and solicitation of public support for judicial candidates); *Ackerson v. Ky. Jud. Retirement & Removal Comm'n*, 776 F. Supp. 309, 313-16 (W.D. Ky. 1991) (granting preliminary injunction enjoining enforcement of provision of Kentucky Code of Judicial Conduct prohibiting promises of conduct and statements regarding court administrative issues but upholding constitutionality of same provision regarding issues likely to come before court); *Clark v. Burleigh*, 841 P.2d 975, 988 (Cal. 1992) (upholding constitutionality of California statute limiting judicial candidate's statement for inclusion in voter's pamphlet to recitation of candidate's name, age, occupation, and brief description of background and qualifications and prohibiting reference to other judicial candidates); *In re Buckson*, 610 A.2d 203, 222-25 (Del. 1992) (upholding constitutionality of provisions of Delaware Code of Judicial Conduct requiring judges to resign from bench prior to running for elective non-judicial offices and prohibiting judges from attending political gatherings); *Summe v. Jud. Retirement & Removal Comm'n*, 947 S.W.2d 42, 47-48 (Ky. 1997) (upholding constitutionality of provision of Kentucky Code of Judicial Conduct prohibiting false statements); *In re Chmura*, 608 N.W.2d 31, 33 (Mich. 2000) (declaring provision of Michigan Code of Judicial Conduct prohibiting false statements to be unconstitutional but upholding constitutionality of narrower construction of provision); *In re Broadbelt*, 683 A.2d 543, 552 (N.J. 1996) (per curiam) (upholding constitutionality of provisions of New Jersey Code of Judicial Conduct prohibiting judges from commenting on pending proceedings and from lending prestige of their office to advance private interests of others); *In re Fadeley*, 802 P.2d 31, 38-40 (Or. 1990) (per curiam) (upholding constitutionality of Oregon Code of Judicial Conduct prohibiting judges from personally soliciting campaign contributions).

ment protections and the right of states to regulate the behavior of their judicial officers and candidates. But no clear consensus has developed.

For instance, in *Weaver v. Bonner*, 309 F.3d 1312 (11th Cir. 2002), the Eleventh Circuit Court overturned Georgia's ban on personal campaign fund solicitations. "[W]e believe that the Supreme Court's decision in *White* suggests that the standard for judicial elections should be the same as the standard for legislative and executive elections." *Weaver*, 309 F.3d at 1321. But *White* itself said no such thing: "we neither assert nor imply that the First Amendment requires campaigns for judicial office to sound the same as those for legislative office." *White*, 536 U.S. at 783. Indeed, the high courts of Maine and New York have upheld restrictions on judicial campaign conduct even in light of *White*.[6] *See In re Dunleavy*, 838 A.2d 338 (Me. 2003) (upholding ban on sitting judges from soliciting support for political candidates and political organizations, and from purchasing tickets to political dinners or functions); *In re Raab*, 793 N.E.2d 1287, 1292 (N.Y. 2003) (upholding limitations on judicial candidates' participation in other candidates campaigns and contributions to political organizations that support other candidates or general party objectives; "the State's interest in ensuring that judgeships are not—and do not appear to be—'for sale' is beyond compelling. The public would justifiably lose confidence in the court system were it otherwise and, without public confidence, the judicial branch could not function.").

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[6] Disciplinary bodies and judicial ethics advisory committees in a number of jurisdictions have stated that campaign speech restrictions not explicitly addressed by the *White* decision should continue to be enforced. *See* Cynthia Gray, *The States' Response to Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 86 JUDICATURE 163 (2002).

These conflicting opinions are to be expected. As one district court has noted:

> To say there is considerable uncertainty regarding the scope of the Supreme Court's decision in *White* is an understatement. Whether the decision in *White* left *any* room for the regulation of speech of judicial candidates is a question yet to be resolved .... It has caused, and will continue to cause, considerable uncertainty and consternation on the part of judicial candidates.

North Dakota Family Alliance v. Bader, 361 F. Supp. 2d 1021, 1041-42 (D.N.D. 2005). This confusion will permeate judicial elections across the nation.

No fewer than 30 states are set to hold elections of their high court judges in 2006. Justice at Stake, *Scheduled Supreme Court Elections 2006-2008*, http://www.justiceatstake.org/files/SCElections06to08.pdf. Absent guidance from this Court, judicial candidates are left in an untenable situation—either comply with potentially suspect rules, or worse, violate statues that are ultimately deemed constitutional and suffer prosecution and punishment. *See, e.g.*, *White*, 536 U.S. at 769 ("[F]earing that further ethical complaints would jeopardize his ability to practice law, Wersal withdrew from the election."). To alleviate this state of confusion, the Court should provide guidance.

II. The Petition Presents The Opportunity For This Court To Address The Constitutionally Permissible Bounds Of Judicial Campaign Restrictions.

This case concerns both the role of the judiciary and public's trust in the courts. It is therefore important to the ABA, which promulgates judicial-ethics standards:

> Explicit standards of judicial conduct provide essential guidance for judges in the proper discharge of their duties and the honorable conduct of their office. The

> legislative bodies, judicial committees, and professional associations that promulgate those standards perform a vital public service.

White, 536 U.S. at 793 (Kennedy, J., concurring).

As the drafter of the Model Code of Judicial Conduct adopted in a majority of the states, the ABA must consider this Court's direct influence on the shape of judicial governance. The Model Code is being evaluated at the very time that this Court will consider granting certiorari in this case. How that Code is interpreted—and whether the Partisan Activities Clause and the Solicitations Clause will survive—is of great moment.

A. Judicial Independence, Integrity, and Impartiality are Critical Both to the Role of the Judiciary in American Government and the Public's Respect for the Courts.

"The citizen's respect for judgments depends . . . upon the issuing court's absolute probity." *White*, 536 U.S. at 793 (Kennedy, J., concurring). After all, "[j]udicial integrity is, in consequence [of public trust in a court's judgments], a state interest of the highest order." *Id.*

Following *White*, many lower courts have reviewed the judicial canons only in the context of the First Amendment. *See, e.g.*, *Weaver v. Bonner*, 309 F.3d 1312 (11th Cir. 2002) (striking down Georgia's ban on personal campaign fund solicitations). They do so with no apparent consideration of the important distinctions between judicial campaigns and those of the political branches. But one of the primary purposes of judicial canons, and therefore of the ABA's model-code drafters, is the protection of judicial independence, integrity, and impartiality.

In American government, the judiciary serves as a counterbalance to the majoritarian executive and legislative

branches. While introducing the Bill of Rights to the first Congress, James Madison articulated the link between security of fundamental, personal rights and an independent judiciary:

> Independent tribunals of justice will consider themselves in a peculiar manner the guardians of those rights; they will be an impenetrable bulwark against every assumption of power in the legislative or executive; they will be naturally led to resist every encroachment upon rights expressly stipulated for in the constitution by the declaration of rights.

1 ANNALS OF CONG. 457 (Joesph Gales, ed., 1789) (reprinted in THE MIND OF THE FOUNDER 224 (Marvin Meyers, ed., 1973)). *See also* ALEXANDER HAMILTON, THE FEDERALIST NO. 78 ("The complete independence of the courts of justice is peculiarly essential in a limited Constitution."); *West Virginia State Bd. of Educ. v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624, 638 (1943) ("One's right to life, liberty, and property, to free speech, a free press, freedom of worship and assembly, and other fundamental rights may not be submitted to vote; they depend on the outcome of no elections.").

As this Court has noted, "[t]here is almost no legal or political issue that is unlikely to come before a judge of an American court, state or federal, of general jurisdiction." *White*, 536 U.S. at 772-73 (quoting *Buckley*, 997 F.2d at 229). In handling this virtually infinite variety of matters, judges must resolve disputed cases and issues; they are not elected to represent geographic constituencies, or to further the interests and values of certain constituencies. *See id.* at 805-07 (Ginsburg, J., dissenting). "[T]he judge represents the Law—which often requires him to rule against the People." *Chisom v. Roemer*, 501 U.S. 380, 411 (1991) (Scalia, J., dissenting).

Because of a judge's unique position in the government, the judicial branch has a need to create and maintain independence from "outside" influences. *See Buckley v. Illinois Jud. Inquiry Bd.*, 997 F.2d 224, 228 (7th Cir. 1993) ("Judges

remain different from legislators and executive officials, even when all are elected, in ways that bear on the strength of the state's interest in restricting their freedom of speech.").[7] Put another way, judges are different from other governmental officials—and should be regulated differently too. "[S]tates need not treat candidates for judicial office the same as candidates for other elective offices" because "the judicial office is different in key respects from other offices." *Am. Civil Liberties Union of Fla., Inc. v. Fla. Bar*, 744 F. Supp. 1094, 1097 (N.D. Fla. 1990).

The *White* case produced five separate opinions. But it also produced agreement on two key points. The Court was unanimous in its beliefs that (1) an independent and impartial judiciary is central to American democracy,[8] and (2) judicial campaigns can present the possibility of undermining the public's confidence in the judiciary.[9]

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[7] *Compare Katz v. United States*, 389 U.S. 347, 364 (1967) (Douglas, J., concurring) ("Under the separation of powers created by the Constitution, the Executive Branch is not supposed to be neutral and disinterested."), *with FrontLine: Justice for Sale* (PBS television broadcast Nov. 23, 1999) (transcript avail. at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/justice/ interviews/supremo.html) (quoting Justice Kennedy, "[T]he law commands allegiance only if it commands respect. It commands respect only if the public thinks the judges are neutral.").

[8] "It may well be that impartiality in this sense, and the appearance of it, are desirable in the judiciary . . . ." *White*, 536 U.S. at 778 (Scalia, J., joined by Rehnquist, C.J., O'Connor, J., Kennedy, J., and Thomas, J.); "We of course want judges to be impartial . . . ." *Id.* at 788 (O'Connor, J., concurring); "Judicial integrity is, in consequence, a state interest of the highest order . . . ." *Id.* at 793 (Kennedy, J., concurring); "[T]he State [has an] interest in maintaining both the appearance in this form of impartiality and its actuality." (Stevens, J., dissenting, joined by Souter, J., Ginsberg J., and Breyer, J.); "[P]reserving the public's confidence in the integrity and impartiality of its judiciary [is a compelling state interest]." *Id.* at 817 (Ginsberg, J., joined by Stevens, J., Souter, J., and Breyer, J., dissenting).

[9] "[W]e neither assert nor imply that the First Amendment requires campaigns for judicial office to sound the same as those for legislative

Given American democracy's need for judicial independence, integrity, and impartiality, the ABA has fostered standards that recognize the importance of these ideas. "Intrinsic to all sections of th[e] Code are the precepts that judges, individually and collectively, must respect and honor the judicial office as a public trust and strive to enhance and maintain confidence in our legal system." ABA MODEL CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT (1990) (Preamble).

The ABA favors "an election process geared to the judicial office." *White*, 536 U.S. at 805 (Ginsburg, J., dissenting). In light of the Court's unanimity in endorsing the goal of preserving judicial integrity, the question left open by *White* is the constitutionally-permissible means of upholding this goal. This case provides an excellent opportunity to consider this important question.

B. The ABA Seeks This Court's Guidance in Crafting a Judicial Ethics Code That Promotes Judicial Independence, Integrity, and Impartiality.

This Court has noted the ABA's role in stating standards of judicial ethics. *See White*, 536 U.S. at 786 ("The first code

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office." *White*, 536 U.S. at 783 (Scalia, J., joined by Rehnquist, C.J., O'Connor, J., Kennedy, J., and Thomas, J.); "Even if judges were able to refrain from favoring donors, the mere possibility that judges' decisions may be motivated by the desire to repay campaign contributors is likely to undermine the public's confidence in the judiciary." *Id.* at 790 (O'Connor, J., concurring); "[J]udicial campaigns in an age of frenetic fundraising and mass media may foster disrespect for the legal system." *Id.* at 794 (Kennedy, J., concurring); "Elected judges, no less than appointed judges, occupy an office of trust that is fundamentally different from that occupied by policymaking officials . . . . There is a critical difference between the work of the judge and the work of other public officials . . . ." *Id.* at 797-98, 801 (Stevens, J., dissenting, joined by Souter, J., Ginsberg J., and Breyer, J.); "Judges, however, are not political actors. They do not sit as representatives of particular persons, communities, or parties; they serve no faction or constituency. . . ." *Id.* at 817 (Ginsberg, J., dissenting).

regulating judicial conduct was adopted by the ABA in 1924."); 48 ABA Reports 74 (1923) (report of Chief Justice Taft). Since its first involvement in promulgating the model code, the ABA's interest has been the same:

> [T]he American Bar Association, mindful that the character and conduct of a judge should never be objects of indifference, and that declared ethical standards tend to become habits of life, deems it desirable to set forth its views respecting those principles which should govern the personal practice of members of the judiciary in the administration of their office. The Association accordingly adopts the following Canons, the spirit of which it suggests as a proper guide and reminder for judges, and as indicating what the people have a right to expect from them.

ABA CANONS OF JUD. ETHICS (1924) (Preamble).

The ABA's interest in judicial ethics extends to those cases discussing its Model Code. This case involves two provisions of the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct, which in turn are derived in part from the ABA Model Code of Judicial Conduct. *Compare* 52 MINN. STAT., CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT 5B(2) (the "Solicitation Clause") *and* 52 MINN. STAT., CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT 5A(1) (the "Partisan Activities Clause") *with* ABA MODEL CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT, Canon 5 (1990).

The ABA expends tremendous effort in the formulation of its judicial ethics code. The ABA seeks input from groups spanning the entire legal community, including representatives of the ABA Judicial Administration Division Coordinating Committee, the Committee on Codes of Conduct of the Judicial Conference of the United States, the Center for Judicial Conduct Organizations, the American Judicature Society, the Josephson Institute for the Advancement of Ethics, and the Conference of Chief Justices. Additionally, federal and state judges in every jurisdiction provide feedback and in-

sights into working drafts. *See, e.g.*, JUDICIAL CODE SUBCOMM. OF THE ABA STANDING COMM. ON ETHICS & PROF. RESPONSIBILITY, DRAFT REVISIONS TO THE ABA CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT (May 1, 1989).

Following this Court's decision in *White*, the ABA Standing Committee on Federal Judicial Improvements formed a working group on the First Amendment and Judicial Campaigns. *See* Eileen Gallagher, *Judicial Ethics and the First Amendment*, JUDGES' J. 26, 26 (Spring 2003). The purpose of the group was to "evaluate Canon 5 of the Model Code of Judicial Conduct in light of First Amendment concerns." *Id.* at 27.

Building upon the working group's deliberative efforts, the ABA's Joint Commission to Evaluate the Model Code of Judicial Conduct recently issued a new draft of Canon 5. *See* News Release, ABA, *ABA Releases Complete Final Draft of Revisions to Model Code of Judicial Conduct* (Dec. 21, 2005). This new version reflects the ABA's intensive iterative process to set reasoned restrictions on the political activities of judges and judicial candidates. *See id.* For instance, the final, complete draft differentiates ethical rules governing candidates in partisan elections from rules governing candidates in non-partisan elections (like those in Minnesota). *See id.*

Inasmuch as the provisions of the ABA's Canon 5 are now under study and redrafting, the ABA has an interest in learning this Court's reasoning about standards that relate to a judicial candidate's or judge's behavior on the campaign trail. The ABA respectfully requests this Court's review of the questions presented.

CONCLUSION

The Petition for a Writ of Certiorari to the Eighth Circuit should be granted.

Respectfully submitted,

Of Counsel:

RICHARD P. HOGAN, JR.
JENNIFER BRUCH HOGAN
MATTHEW E. COVELER

MICHAEL S. GRECO *
President
AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION
312 N. Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60610
(312) 988-5295

* Counsel of Record

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IN THE

Supreme Court of the United States

MARTHA HOLTON DIMICK, CHAIRPERSON, MINNESOTA BOARD ON JUDICIAL STANDARDS, *et al.*,

Petitioners,

CORRECTED COPY

v.

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, *et al.*,

Respondents.

On Petition for a Writ of Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit

BRIEF OF *AMICI CURIAE* CONCERNED CORPORATIONS IN SUPPORT OF PETITIONERS

DAVID J. SCHENCK
DAVID L. HORAN
JONES DAY
2727 North Harwood Street
Dallas, Texas 75201
(214) 220-3939

DONALD B. AYER
(Counsel Of Record)
JONES DAY
51 Louisiana Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 879-3939

BENJAMIN B. WALTHER
JONES DAY
222 East 41st Street
New York, NY 10017
(212) 326-3939

Counsel for Amici Curiae

WILSON-EPES PRINTING CO., INC. – (202) 789-0096 – WASHINGTON, D. C. 20001

This brief is filed on behalf of the following 39 companies:

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INTEREST OF THE *AMICI*[1]

Amici Curiae Concerned Corporations are thirty-nine (39) leading American corporations engaged in a broad range of industries, including manufacturing, retailing, and service, throughout the United States. Because of the size and breadth of their businesses, *Amici* are frequently parties in the nation's state courts, confronting all manner of controversies ranging from routine contract, tort, or personnel issues to cases involving serious long-term consequences for their companies. *Amici* have therefore been intensely interested in the operation of the state courts for many years. *Amici* are thus well-positioned to comment on trends affecting state courts, including those targeted by Minnesota's Code of Judicial Conduct provisions at issue in this case, dealing with direct solicitation of money and partisan political activities by candidates.

Amici do not quarrel with the choice by the majority of states to select their judges by means of a popular election process, as such decisions manifest a core democratic value that is at the heart of our system of government. *Amici* are aware, however, that many of these states are concerned that unregulated, partisan judicial elections have undesirable consequences that can be minimized, if not entirely eliminated, by modest governmental measures. *Amici* support these efforts. A choice to democratically elect judges need not entail the acceptance of all of the negative effects that may flow from partisan elections.

In particular, *Amici* are acutely aware of a number of troubling developments contributing to a decline in the perceived fairness of state courts and believe that the Minnesota provisions invalidated by the United States Court

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[1] No party other than *Amici* and their counsel authored this brief in whole or in part, and no person or entity, other than *Amici* and their counsel, has made a monetary contribution to the preparation or submission of this brief. All parties have consented to the filing of this *Amici Curiae* brief, and the parties' written consents are or will be on file with the Clerk of the Court.

of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit are modest and well-conceived efforts to address those problems. Nearly everywhere, the costs of running a competitive race for state judicial office are increasing,[2] along with the contentiousness of such elections—especially in light of the increasing focus on highly emotional "wedge issues" that often have little relation to the judicial office. And as the need for funds has increased, the personal involvement of the candidates in raising money has also become more important.

In *Amici*'s experience, both the degree of polarization around particular issues and the levels of campaign funding tend to be higher in judicial elections where political parties play a significant role.[3] In such contests, candidates are compelled to align themselves with a political party in order to obtain the voter and financial support that will allow them to be competitive. The partisan methods of attracting voters on ideological grounds and of spending large sums on advertising in turn expand and intensify the "wedge-issue" electioneering.

Not surprisingly, the candidates' dependence on campaign funds and political parties raises questions about the independence and impartiality of successful candidates once they are on the bench. Numerous empirical studies confirm that the general public and the bar share *Amici*'s concern. That concern rests on the risk that some judges who must raise large quantities of money and actively promote their partisan affiliation in order to secure election will be

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[2] For example, in 2004, the average amount raised by the winning candidate in the forty-three races for state supreme court seats in which candidates raised any money increased 45%—to over $650,000—from the 2002 judicial elections. Deborah Goldberg, *et al.*, *The New Politics of Judicial Elections 2004*, *available at* http://www.justiceatstake.org/files/NewPoliticsReport2004.pdf.

[3] This is true both in judicial elections that are officially denominated as partisan and in non-partisan races in which political parties nonetheless are actively involved.

beholden to their supporters—including political party operatives in and out of government without whose assistance election would not have been (and re-election will not be) possible.

Finally, it has also been *Amici*'s shared experience that the prospect of increasingly costly, divisive, and partisan judicial elections discourages many of the most qualified candidates from seeking office and, likewise, discourages well-qualified judges from seeking re-election.

In these circumstances, *Amici* often find themselves between a rock and a hard place. As members of the communities in which they operate, and as regular participants in the judicial process, nearly all of the *Amici* are often approached with requests to contribute to judicial candidates in many of the 39 states employing electoral systems for the selection of judges. While *Amici* are keen to support a qualified judiciary, any decision to contribute to even the most promising candidate has the potential to create an appearance of seeking favor in any future litigation. That potential is only compounded where the judge himself makes the request. On the other hand, refusing to give may create a real or perceived disadvantage that neither the *Amici* nor their shareholders can lightly disregard.

The problem is by no means confined to *Amici*'s home jurisdictions or to circumstances in which they are affirmatively asked to contribute. *Amici* often have reasons for concern about—and many of them have had at least one experience of—receiving what appears to be less than fair and impartial justice in jurisdictions where they are not located and have not contributed to or been solicited by judicial candidates. The phenomenon of being "home-towned" is a familiar one. As one leading plaintiff's counsel has described:

> [W]hat I call the "magic jurisdiction," . . . [is] where the judiciary is elected with verdict money. The trial lawyers have established

> relationships with the judges that are elected; they're State Court judges; they're popul[ists]. They've got large populations of voters who are in on the deal, they're getting their [piece] in many cases. And so, it's a political force in their jurisdiction, and it's almost impossible to get a fair trial if you're a defendant in some of these places. The plaintiff lawyer walks in there and writes the number on the blackboard, and the first juror meets the last one coming out the door with that amount of money. . . .[4]

Fortunately, such "magic jurisdictions" in America are limited in number. But the disturbing trend toward highly partisan and divisive elections of judges serves only to increase the prospect for such mischief and creates a parallel phenomenon that is only somewhat less malignant: namely, that the prospect of being perceived as beholden to financial and partisan supporters discourages many of the best candidates from service.

INTRODUCTION

The provisions of Minnesota's Code of Judicial Conduct struck down by the decision of the *en banc* Eighth Circuit are modest and effective measures. While perhaps it is impossible to remove all concern that an electoral system funded by contributions will leave candidates beholden to their contributors, Minnesota's relatively modest bar on direct solicitation by candidates addresses this problem by insulating the candidate himself from the fundraising activity. And the bar on partisan identification or activities by candidates during the electoral process, while not

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[4] Richard Scruggs, *Asbestos for Lunch*, Panel Discussion at the Prudential Securities Financial Research and Regulatory Conference (May 9, 2002), *in Industry Commentary* (Prudential Securities, Inc., New York), Jun[illegible] 2002, at 5 (transcript of comments of Richard Scruggs).

absolutely preventing political parties from becoming involved in the election, at least forecloses the judicial candidate himself from overtly injecting such a partisan aspect into the campaign. From the perspective of *Amici*, these measures play an important role in preventing, or at least greatly curbing, the threat of a race to bottom, wherein judicial candidates must be willing to "drag the sack" and actively cultivate partisan alliances in order to have any chance of getting elected.

I. MINNESOTA'S REGULATION OF SOLICITATIONS BY JUDICIAL CANDIDATES PROVIDES SUBSTANTIAL RELIEF FROM A SERIOUS PROBLEM

A. Personal Solicitation by Judicial Candidates Creates a Number of Serious Problems

Based on their own experience, *Amici* submit that direct and personal solicitations of campaign contributions by a judge or judicial candidate are likely to be coercive, contribute to a widespread—and reasonable—perception of bias in the administration of justice, and deter many well-qualified attorneys and judges from seeking or remaining in judicial positions.

1. Personal Requests for Money by Judgeship Candidates are Coercive when Directed to Repeat Litigants

Direct appeals by the candidate himself frame the request for money in the most personal terms, and a refusal to contribute is thus likely to be construed as a rebuff. Even with a bar on disclosing contributors' identities to the candidate, a contributor has no way to be certain that his actions will not get back to the candidate in one way or another. Indeed, unless the contributor is peculiarly familiar with campaign regulations, he will not even know that his contribution decision is not supposed to make its way back to the judge. In all events, a personal request for financial assistance by a judicial candidate naturally gives rise to a

concern that the decision whether and how much to contribute may impact how one will be treated as a litigant.

To be sure, many—hopefully most—judges would never be influenced by the fact or absence of a contribution, assuming they learned of it. However, the possibility of such improper influence, based on one's response to a request for help, is an imponderable which generally cannot be evaluated with certainty. *See Republican Party v. White*, 416 F.3d 738, 774 (8th Cir.) (Gibson, J., dissenting) (noting that "a poll from Texas showed that 48% of state appellate and trial judges surveyed believed that campaign contributions had a fairly significant or very significant degree of influence over judicial decisionmaking"), *petition for cert. filed*, 74 U.S.L.W. 3303 (No. 05-566, Oct. 31, 2005). That uncertainty, coupled with the personal character of the appeal, puts repeat litigants especially in a very difficult position in determining how to respond.

2. Personal Solicitation by Candidates Compounds Public Perceptions of Judicial Bias

The practice of judicial candidates openly requesting and receiving large amounts of money—even if only through mass mailings and large meetings, and under a rule like Minnesota's that prohibits candidates from learning who did and did not give—contributes to a public perception, supported by empirical evidence, that judges may favor lawyers and litigants who contributed to their campaigns.

For example, a poll regarding Texas judicial elections, which include no bar on personal solicitation, revealed that fully 83 percent of Texans and 79 percent of practicing lawyers surveyed believed that campaign contributions significantly influence an elected judge's decisions. *White*, 416 F.3d at 774 (Gibson, J., dissenting) (citing Alexander Wohl, *Justice for Rent*, THE AMERICAN PROSPECT (May 22, 2000)). This perception is not always unreasonable, even if it cannot be determined whether it is accurate. The Texas

Supreme Court, for instance, was 750 percent more likely to grant petitions for discretionary review filed in 1994-98 by contributors of at least $100,000 than by non-contributors. Contributors of $250,000 or more were 1,000 percent more likely to be heard than non-contributors.[5]

3. Personal Solicitation by Candidates Creates Concerns Even Where a Party is not Solicited

For *Amici* and others, the effects of such potential bias are perhaps most acute in jurisdictions in which they are engaged in litigation, though they have little or no continuous presence there. In these locales, *Amici* sometimes find themselves exposed to the added risk of being seen as an out-of-state deep pocket. A former elected Justice of the West Virginia Supreme Court, Richard Neely, pointed out this problem by describing the view taken by some elected state court judges toward out-of-state defendants:

> As long as I am allowed to redistribute wealth from out-of-state companies to injured in-state plaintiffs, I shall continue to do so. Not only is my sleep enhanced when I give someone else's money away, but so is my job security, because the in-state plaintiffs, their families, and their friends will reelect me.[6]

The systemic damage associated with such "home-towning" is made worse when judicial candidates may

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[5] Texans for Public Justice, *Pay to Play: How Big Money Buys Access to the Texas Supreme Court*, http://www.tpj.org/docs/2001/04/reports/paytoplay/index.htm; *see also* Aman McLeod, *If At First You Don't Succeed: A Critical Evaluation of Judicial Selection Reform Efforts*, 107 W. VA. L. REV. 499, 505-09 (2005) (compiling and discussing studies demonstrating the effect of campaign contributions on judicial decision-making).

[6] Richard Neely, *The Product Liability Mess: How Business Can Be Rescued From The Politics Of State Courts*, at 4 (The Free Press: New York 1988).

personally solicit campaign contributions. *Amici* will be at a real or apparent disadvantage against local adversaries who personally answered a judge's personal request for funds. *Amici* are thus forced to make judgments about whether to settle or try a case in such jurisdictions, often resulting in fewer cases being tried and higher settlements.

4. Allowing Personal Solicitation in Judicial Elections Deters Many Qualified Candidates from Seeking Judicial Office

Some of the *Amici* and their employees have participated, through bar associations, community organizations, and word of mouth, in efforts to encourage well-qualified attorneys to seek judicial office. Those efforts have revealed another serious downside of the increasingly expensive and contentious character of judicial elections: outstanding attorneys who might otherwise be interested in public service as a state court judge despite lagging salaries are often discouraged from seeking office in a system that effectively requires them to act in a way that undermines the appearance of judicial independence. *See, e.g.*, Michael W. Bowers, *Public Financing of Judicial Campaigns: Practices and Prospects*, 4 NEV. L.J. 107, 114 (2003) ("Not only is the amount needed to run a campaign often staggering, but many might find the notion of soliciting potential litigants and their attorneys for contributions to be ethically distasteful.").

The incentive to seek judicial office often rests on an altruistic desire to serve and to advance the public good through evenhanded application of the law. These idealistic aspirations are too often quelled, and candidacies are discouraged, by the necessity for candidates to engage in conduct such as the personal solicitation of funds.

B. Minnesota's Solicitation Clause Promotes the Integrity, Impartiality, and Quality of a State Judiciary

Although no reform can remove all concern that judicial elections will leave candidates beholden to their contributors

and deter some qualified candidates, Minnesota's solicitation clause addresses these concerns by reasonably regulating the method of judicial fundraising. Specifically, the clause leaves candidates fully free to raise funds through committees in a manner that largely eliminates the appearance that the candidate will later be influenced by contribution decisions. By preventing direct solicitation by candidates, this rule also avoids the most egregiously coercive aspects of judicial campaign solicitation.

Faced with a request from a campaign committee rather than the would-be judge, a potential donor has somewhat less reason to wonder whether declining to give will create a risk of unfavorable future treatment at the hands of the judge. This is especially true for litigants who may not be aware that their contribution decisions will be shielded from the candidate. This sensible limitation on the most problematic form of fundraising, while not a complete solution to the problem, also plays an important role in reassuring the general public that judges themselves are a step removed from the "nitty-gritty" of the fundraising process and, consequently, encourages qualified candidates to seek office. Further, the solicitation clause reduces concerns that *Amici* and other out-of-town litigants will be "home-towned" in jurisdictions in which they do not participate in judicial fundraising, because judges in these jurisdictions are less likely to be indebted to local interests when they do not know the identity of their contributors.

II. MINNESOTA'S MODEST LIMITATIONS ON PARTISAN ACTIVITIES BY JUDICIAL CANDIDATES REDUCES PERCEIVED BIAS AND PROMOTES THE SEPARATION OF POWERS

A. Entanglement Between Judicial Candidates and Political Parties During the Judicial Campaign Threatens Judicial Independence

Based on their own experience, *Amici* submit that judicial candidates' direct involvement with and dependence upon

political parties during the judicial campaign itself threatens the actual and perceived fairness of the state judiciary, undermines important separation of powers interests, and deters qualified judicial office-seekers.

1. Judicial Dependence upon Political Parties Raises Questions of Bias and Fairness of Judicial Proceedings

In *Amici*'s shared experience, the involvement of judicial candidates with political parties during contested campaigns has tended greatly to increase the financial and organizational resources needed to run a campaign. Intensely partisan campaigns are also the ones that most commonly feature a heavy emphasis on particular "wedge" moral issues, which likewise tend to polarize the electorate.

Such a situation tends to create an appearance, and may in turn create a reality, in which the candidate is beholden to his party endorser and is necessarily reliant on the party when the judge seeks re-election. This reliance, in turn, creates at least an appearance of potential favoritism wherever political interests are implicated in the judicial arena. Certainly this is true where the judge is called upon to adjudicate cases in which his political party is itself a litigant or, more often, in cases in which the judge is called upon to consider the validity of legislation sponsored by his party.

Further, direct partisan political involvement in judicial campaigns has been shown to be associated with disparately large awards against out-of-state parties and has contributed to a corresponding perception of judicial bias. A recent statistical analysis of tort cases found that tort awards for cases *adjudicated in state court* against out-of-state defendants were approximately 54% higher in states with partisan elected judges at all levels of the judiciary.[7] Furthermore, the "home-towning" effect in state court is

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[7] Eric Helland & Alexander Tabarrok, *The Effect of Electoral Institutions on Tort Awards*, 4 AM. L. & ECON. REV. 341, 367 (2002).

much stronger in these states: while tort awards against out-of-state defendants are larger than in-state defendants in all states, the disparity between awards against out-of-state and in-state defendants is much larger in partisan states than in non-partisan ones. These disparities cannot be explained by differences in substantive law, because the disparities between partisan and non-partisan states do not show up in federal diversity cases.[8]

Not surprisingly, senior in-house lawyers in large corporations, including *Amici*, widely believe that their employers are likely to face less than fair judicial proceedings in state courts that elect their judges in partisan elections. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for Judicial Reform ("IJR") asked such lawyers to grade the "fairness" of the judges in each state and found that five of the six states with the lowest scores—Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Illinois, and West Virginia—were among the handful of states that conduct partisan elections at all levels of the judiciary.[9] Similarly, the American Tort Reform Association's annual survey of "judicial hellholes"—defined as "places where judges systematically apply laws and court procedures in an unfair and unbalanced manner"—consistently identifies the majority of these so-called "hellholes" as courts within partisan election states.[10]

These surveys reflect a near total loss of confidence in some of our state court systems. Approximately 50% of the IJR survey respondents gave Louisiana and Alabama grades

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[8] *Id.* at 366.

[9] 2005 U.S. Chamber of Commerce State Liability Ranking Study, Final Report, conducted by Harris Interactive, *available at* http://www.instituteforlegalreform.com/harris/pdf/HarrisPoll2005-FullReport.pdf ("2005 U.S. Chamber of Commerce Study").

[10] *See* American Tort Reform Association, *Judicial Hellholes 2005*, *available at* http://www.atra.org/reports/hellholes/report.pdf. In 2005, 5 of the 6 jurisdictions designated as "hellholes" were located in partisan states; in 2004, 7 of 9 hellholes were so located.

of "D" or "F" on the issue of judicial fairness.[11] Alabama's state court system has been described as a "disgrace," a "quagmire," and a "place where you can be sued out of business"—in part because of harsh punitive damage awards that have been shown to be "unparalleled in the history of American jurisprudence."[12]

2. Judicial Candidates' Direct Involvement with and Dependence upon Political Parties Threatens Important Separation of Powers Interests

As the Framers of the federal Constitution recognized, the independence of the judge sitting on the bench is critical to the impartial administration of justice. *E.g.*, THE FEDERALIST NO. 78 (Alexander Hamilton). While Minnesota and other states have chosen to elect their judges, they should be no less entitled to seek a judiciary independent of the political forces that elect their other branches of government. A system that requires a judge to become actively involved with and dependant upon a political party undermines the separation of powers that is essential to preserving judicial independence. While a state's legislative branch will be assembled by political party interests to pass laws, judges must be permitted to adjudicate the validity of those laws without being beholden to the same political forces that enacted them.

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[11] 2005 U.S. Chamber of Commerce Study, *supra*, n.8.

[12] *See* Nathan C. Prater, *Punitive Damages in Alabama: A Proposal For Reform*, 26 CUMB. L. REV. 1005, 1015-16 (1995) (quoting descriptions of the Alabama court system by, respectively, the *Mobile Register*, the *Wall Street Journal*, former Alabama Governor Fob James, and Yale Law School Professor George Priest).

3. Well-Qualified, Independent-Minded Judicial Candidates are Deterred by the Practical Requirement of Dependence on Political Parties

The partisan politicization of judicial elections means that candidate selection becomes dependent on intra-party politics and that election results become more dependent on fund-raising and campaign marketing controlled by the political parties.[13] These realities will have a substantial impact on the willingness of independent-minded candidates to seek office and on their chances of electoral success when they do decide to run. These consequences will still obtain without party labels on the ballot, where the candidates and their supporters nonetheless frame the election in highly partisan terms. Such *de facto* partisan elections also carry greatly increased fundraising demands and an unavoidable dependence on party resources.

B. Minnesota's Partisan Activities Clause Significantly Ameliorates Concerns that Judicial Candidates' Direct Involvement with and Dependence upon Political Parties Will Undermine the Impartiality, Independence, and Quality of a State Judiciary

Minnesota's partisan activities regulations combat these problems by reducing the extent to which its judges will become reliant on the political parties' endorsements, contributions, and rallies as a condition of elevation to the bench. They are effective in these respects, even though the limitations they impose are quite modest.

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[13] Charles Lewis, The Center for Public Integrity, *Judiciary Should Let Sunshine In To Reduce Public Skepticism, available at* http://www.publicintegrity.org/report.aspx?aid=301 (quoting media consultant Helen Lavalle as saying "We sell a judge the same way we sell anything. It's unfair. People are ending up with a chance to be on a bench who have no business being there.").

The partisan activities clause reduces judges' dependence on party leaders and organizations by prohibiting candidates from identifying with one party or the other. Candidates may not stake their public appeal on partisan affiliation, and fundraising efforts are thus much less likely to follow strictly partisan lines. Accordingly, candidates are far less likely to become sharply identified in the public mind with one party or the other, and the concerns about bias that flow from such identity are greatly reduced. Moreover, the potential influence of elected officials in other branches of government is likewise reduced for the same reason.

A truly non-partisan electoral process of the sort that Minnesota has sought to achieve is also far more inviting to well-qualified candidates who aspire to serve in an independent judiciary. By merely nudging the process away from party labels, the electoral debate is more likely to be centered on the abilities of the individual candidates, who will not effectively be required to pledge their loyalty to a political party as a pre-condition of appearing on the ballot.

III. THE FIRST AMENDMENT SHOULD NOT BE READ TO BAR REASONABLE REGULATION OF JUDICIAL CONTESTS

As detailed above, Minnesota and the many other states selecting judges by contested election have powerful, constitutional interests in preserving the integrity and independence of their judicial branches. Even assuming that Minnesota's efforts to regulate judicial solicitation and partisan activities are properly viewed through the lens of First Amendment strict scrutiny—a proposition that is far from clear[14]—the Eighth Circuit majority erred in holding

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[14] This Court has refused to apply strict scrutiny to regulations of campaign contributions (as opposed to expenditures) or to modest regulation of political association. *Clingman v. Beaver*, 125 S. Ct. 2029, 2039 (2005) ("When a state electoral provision places no heavy burden on associational rights, a state's important regulatory interest will usually be enough to justify reasonable, nondiscriminatory restrictions." (citation

that those regulations failed that test. Rather, as the Eighth Circuit dissenters correctly noted, Minnesota's effort to balance a host of competing constitutional concerns by imposing only relatively modest restrictions on speech and association is not a valid basis for condemning its efforts.

A. Minnesota Clearly Has a Compelling Interest in Judicial Integrity and Independence

It is clear, notwithstanding the holding below, that a state's interest in preserving the actual and perceived integrity of its judiciary "lies at the very heart of a state's ability to provide an effective government for the people." *White*, 416 F.3d at 766 (Gibson, J., dissenting).[15] Indeed, this Court has repeatedly recognized this interest as both legitimate and compelling. *E.g.*, *Nixon v. Shrink Mo. Gov't PAC*, 528 U.S. 377, 390 (2000); *FEC v. Nat'l Conservative PAC*, 470 U.S. 480, 496-97 (1985) (referring to "preventing corruption or the appearance of corruption" as a "legitimate and compelling government interest[]"). This interest in avoiding actual and perceived bias and corruption of the judiciary is clearly implicated by both clauses at issue here.

First, the state undoubtedly has a compelling interest in addressing the risk or appearance of improper influence based on direct solicitation of contributions by a judge from individual litigants or their attorneys—whether the solicited

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(continued...)

omitted)); *Nixon v. Shrink Mo. Gov't PAC*, 528 U.S. 377, 386-89 (2000) (refusing to apply strict scrutiny to regulation of campaign contributions). Here, Minnesota's effort to regulate direct solicitation of contributions leaves candidates fully free to request money so long as they do so in such a way as to minimize influence on subsequent judicial decision-making. As such, the regulation is unrelated to the suppression of any message or point of view. *See, e.g.*, *Perry Educ. Ass'n v. Perry Local Educators' Ass'n*, 460 U.S. 37 (1983); *Gresham v. Peterson*, 225 F.3d 899, 905 (7th Cir. 2000) (reviewing restriction on private solicitation of money).

[15] Of course, states are obligated to protect against the appearance of, as well as actual, judicial bias. *Cox v. Louisiana*, 379 U.S. 559, 565 (1965).

parties elect to give or not. *Nixon*, 528 U.S. at 390. And candidates for judicial office who know that "powerful and wide-reaching political organizations" have the ability to "make or break them in each election," incur moral "indebtedness" that is inconsistent with the discharge of the judicial function and "threatens the republic" assured to citizens of all states. *White*, 416 F.3d at 768-69, 773 (Gibson, J, dissenting); U.S. CONST. ART. IV, § 4.[16]

This Court's precedents clearly support the notion that states should be free to act against bias "in intermediate forms that are more subtle than bribery and explicit agreements." *White*, 416 F.3d at 769 (Gibson, J., dissenting). For example, this Court's decision in *Nixon* plainly recognized "a concern not confined to bribery of public officials, but extending to the broader threat from politicians too compliant with the wishes of large contributors." 528 U.S. at 905.

This Court has likewise upheld the Hatch Act's restrictions on the rights of federal employees to take roles in political campaigns, accept positions in political parties, or run for office on a partisan ticket, even though the Act does not require any actual corruption or influence to trigger its proscriptions. *United States Civil Serv. Comm'n v. Nat'l Ass'n of Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. 548 (1973). Clearly, the postal workers affected by the Hatch Act wielded far less partisan power and posed a lesser threat to "the great end of government—the impartial execution of the laws"—than state court judges. *Id.* at 564-65; *see also Marshall v. Jerrico, Inc.*, 446 U.S. 238, 242 (1980) (stressing the heightened due process interest in an impartial tribunal as "preserv[ing] both the appearance and reality of fairness.");

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[16] The "indebtedness" described by the Eighth Circuit dissenters runs invariably to and in favor of local interests. As a result, states like Minnesota have a compelling interest, arising under the Constitution's due process and interstate privileges and immunities clauses, in providing a fair forum to non-resident defendants. U.S. CONST. ART. IV, § 2, cl. 1.

Gannett Co. v. DePasquale, 443 U.S. 368, 392 (1979) (finding interest in a fair trial sufficient to outweigh assumed First Amendment right of press to attend pre-trial hearing).

B. The Eighth Circuit Misapplied This Court's Strict Scrutiny Analysis by Requiring Perfect, Rather than Simply Narrow, Tailoring

The Eighth Circuit majority rejected both clauses, reasoning that Minnesota had not tailored its efforts to fully eradicate the problems that it was purporting to address. But Minnesota's effort to balance competing constitutional obligations is worthy of considerably more judicial deference and respect than the Eighth Circuit afforded. *Compare White,* 416 F.3d at 756 ("the clause's underinclusiveness causes us to doubt that the interest it purportedly serves is sufficiently compelling to abridge core *First Amendment* rights" (emphasis added)), *with Nixon,* 528 U.S. at 400 (Ginsburg, J., concurring) ("[W]here constitutionally protected interests lie on both side of the legal equation . . . there is no place for a strong presumption against constitutionality, of the sort often thought to accompany the words 'strict scrutiny.'").

The Eighth Circuit's approach would require such a delicate traipse between under- and over-inclusiveness that states could not conceivably craft any constitutionally adequate safeguard against the problem of actual or perceived judicial bias.

1. Minnesota's Regulation of Partisan Activities is Narrowly Tailored

The fact that Minnesota crafted its regulations on partisan activities to address only the most serious threats to the interest in judicial integrity and to minimize the constraints on First Amendment interests is hardly a basis to conclude that the regulations are fatally under-inclusive. Instead, this supposed under-inclusiveness confirms only that Minnesota has narrowly tailored its regulations to account for the competing constitutional interests at stake. As Judge Gibson

summarized in dissent, "[e]ven in questions subject to strict scrutiny, there simply has to be some room for judgment about how wide to cast the net, and it should be apparent that it is more offensive to the First Amendment for a measure to be too broad than to be too narrow." *White*, 416 F.3d at 783 (Gibson, J., dissenting).

To be sure, an under-inclusive effort to regulate First Amendment activities in connection with the assertion of new or novel interests can serve to demonstrate a pre-textual motive or to show that the interest at issue is insufficient, if the under-inclusion is unexplained. *Id.* at 775.[17] However, the interests advanced here are hardly new or unrecognized. *Republican Party v. White*, 536 U.S. 765, 793 (2002) (Kennedy, J., concurring) (a state's interest in judicial integrity is well recognized and "of the highest order"); *see also Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1 (1976) (recognizing anti-corruption interest in connection with campaign finance regulations). Contrary to the holding below, Minnesota's efforts cannot be viewed as pre-textual merely because Minnesota has not taken the dramatic and exceedingly restrictive steps of barring candidates with any pre-established public political associations or barring all affiliations with interest groups. *Compare White*, 416 F.3d at 758, *with id.* at 768 (Gibson, J., dissenting). Rather, Minnesota may justifiably choose simply to prevent the indebtedness of judges to the campaign machines of political parties, which select candidates and have influence and power that vastly exceeds those of any interest group. *McConnell v. FEC*, 540 U.S. 93, 188 (2003) (rejecting

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[17] Narrow tailoring that leaves some aspect of the threat unaddressed does not compel the conclusion that the regulation is unconstitutional so long as there is some explanation for the state's targeting. *E.g.*, *McConnell v. FEC*, 540 U.S. 93 (2003) (upholding restrictions on television advertising despite failure to control other media); *Austin v. Mich. Chamber of Commerce*, 494 U.S. 652 (1990) (upholding restrictions on corporate contributions although union contributions remained unchecked).

under-inclusiveness challenge to campaign finance restrictions on political parties but not interest groups).

2. Minnesota's Prohibition of Personal Solicitation of Campaign Contributions is also Narrowly Tailored

Minnesota's effort to regulate solicitation was also reasonably drawn. While the Eighth Circuit majority condemned the regulation as forbidding candidates from personally signing a mass mailing or from appealing directly to large audiences for campaign contributions, it justified this conclusion only by reference to the same regulation's prohibition on the communication of the identities of contributors to the candidate. The majority thus turned the regulation on itself, by relying on one provision of the canon to render others unconstitutional. It also ignored the harmful effects of the types of personal solicitation that it found to be constitutionally protected.

Any direct appeal by a judicial candidate—especially when addressed to repeat litigants—is inherently highly coercive. This is still true of mass mailings and direct requests to large audiences. In each case, the recipient is unlikely to know (and in all events unlikely to trust) that his decision whether to contribute will be kept secret from the judge. Further, the supposed advantage of a mass mailing—that it involves no direct personal contact—is surely more than counterbalanced by the fact that it appears on its face to be an indiscriminate personal appeal for money addressed to many potential litigants and lawyers likely to appear in a judge's court. Such requests thus do a great deal of damage to the appearance of judicial integrity and impartiality.

States choosing among competing constitutional interests are compelled to draw lines somewhere. Where—as in the case of Minnesota's effort to regulate partisan activities and direct solicitation of funds from prospective litigants and their counsel—the line is drawn to minimize the impact on

the First Amendment and to address a harm that is especially acute, there is no basis for condemning the regulation.

IV. THE COURT SHOULD GRANT REVIEW NOW BECAUSE THE JUDICIAL ELECTIONS OF 2006 ARE LIKELY TO BE THE MOST CONTENTIOUS IN MODERN MEMORY

For a variety of reasons, Americans are now more focused on issues surrounding the judiciary than they have been in many decades. Since mid-2005, a public debate on the selection of United States Supreme Court justices, focusing on their positions on highly divisive issues, has been front-page material almost daily. This intense national interest comes at a time when, as set forth above, state judicial elections are becoming ever more contentious, expensive, and partisan.

These facts and others lead *Amici* to believe that the 2006 state judicial elections will be the most intense, hard-fought, and heavily funded in recent history, even as they will include 30 states who will hold elections for their Supreme Courts. And the issues presented in this case bear directly on the electoral processes of many states. Nine of the 19 states that have non-partisan judicial election systems have rules similar to the partisan activity limitation at issue here and will likely confront litigation concerning these regulations' validity in the midst of their primaries or general elections. And 29 of the 39 states with elected judiciaries have restrictions on personal solicitation similar to Minnesota's.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, *Amici* urge the Court to grant the petition for *certiorari*.

Respectfully submitted,

DAVID J. SCHENCK
DAVID L. HORAN
JONES DAY
2727 North Harwood St.
Dallas, Texas 75201
(214) 220-3939

DONALD B. AYER
(Counsel Of Record)
JONES DAY
51 Louisiana Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 879-3939

BENJAMIN B. WALTHER
JONES DAY
222 East 41st Street
New York, NY 10017
(212) 326-3939
Counsel for Amici Curiae

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IN THE

Supreme Court of the United States

MARTHA HOLTON DIMICK, CHAIRPERSON, MINNESOTA BOARD ON JUDICIAL STANDARDS, *et al.*,
Petitioners,

v.

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, *et al.*,
Respondents.

On Petition for a Writ of Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit

BRIEF OF THE CONFERENCE OF CHIEF JUSTICES AS *AMICUS CURIAE* IN SUPPORT OF PETITIONERS

ROY A. SCHOTLAND
600 New Jersey Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 662-9098

KATHLEEN M. SULLIVAN
Counsel of Record
DANIEL H. BROMBERG
WILLIAM ADAMS
DANIEL ZAHEER
QUINN EMANUEL URQUHART OLIVER & HEDGES, LLP
555 Twin Dolphin Drive,
Suite 560
Redwood Shores, CA 94065
(650) 801-5000

Counsel for Amicus Curiae Conference of Chief Justices

January 4, 2006

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INTERESTS OF *AMICUS CURIAE* [1]

The Conference of Chief Justices is an association of the presiding officers of the highest courts of each State, as well as the District of Columbia, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. The Conference's mission is to improve the administration of justice in the courts of the States, commonwealths, and territories. In keeping with that mission, the Conference acts as the national voice of the state courts. The Conference has submitted *amicus* briefs in other cases of importance to state courts, including this case when it was previously before this Court.

This case concerns an issue of particular importance to the Conference: the States' ability to preserve judicial independence in States that elect their judges. For many years, the Conference has studied judicial selection procedures and recommended measures for improving them. In December 2000, the Conference helped to organize a conference of the chief justices of the seventeen most populous States that use judicial elections. This conference recommended that judicial elections be conducted in a nonpartisan manner. *See Call to Action: Statement of the National Summit on Improving Judicial Selection*, 34 LOY. L.A. L. REV. 1353, 1355 (2001).

The decision below causes the Conference grave concern because it injects uncertainty into upcoming judicial elections, threatens the ability of some States to conduct meaningful nonpartisan judicial elections at all, and impairs the ability of other States to ensure that judges are and appear unbiased by campaign donations. The Conference urges this Court to

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[1] The parties have consented to the filing of this brief and their letters of consent have been filed with the Clerk. In accordance with Rule 37.6, *Amicus* states that this brief was not written in whole or in part by counsel for any party, and no person other than *Amicus* has made a monetary contribution to the preparation and submission of this brief.

review the decision below in order to clarify the scope of First Amendment limits on judicial election activity, to dispel the widespread confusion among the State governments and the lower courts over this issue, and to avoid the disruption that the decision below will cause judicial elections, most pressingly those scheduled to take place in 2006.

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

Judicial elections are a long-standing feature of the nation's state judicial systems. The practice of electing state judges began in the mid-nineteenth century, and it is now by far the predominant method of state judicial selection. As in judicial appointment systems, States that have adopted judicial elections have compelling interests in adopting procedures that help preserve judicial independence. Judicial independence is vital to the rule of law, the separation of powers, and the fair and impartial administration of justice. States should be free to advance these interests as a matter of their own self-government, even if they do not choose the judicial appointment process the Framers chose for the federal government.

The decision below, however, injects considerable uncertainty into the States' ability to serve these vital interests, and illustrates the confusion that this Court's decision in *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002), has engendered in the lower courts. Unless this Court clarifies the scope of First Amendment limits on state judicial election procedures, candidates for election or reelection to the bench, as well as state officials charged with regulating their conduct during judicial elections, cannot be sure whether partisan activity restrictions or personal solicitation restrictions are constitutional. Dispelling such uncertainty and confusion is particularly urgent because nearly all the thirty-nine States that use judicial elections are scheduled to hold elections this year.

States with judicial elections use various means to ensure judicial independence from politics. Nineteen States select at least some of their judges through nonpartisan elections, and

accordingly limit the partisan activity of judicial candidates. Prior to *White*, twenty-nine States restricted direct personal solicitation of campaign funds by candidates running for judicial office. The decision below found both such restrictions either barred or severely limited by the First Amendment.

This Court should grant certiorari to clarify that the Constitution permits States to impose such restrictions, which directly advance state interests of the greatest importance. The decision below fails to accord appropriate deference to the state judiciaries' efforts to strike a balance between First Amendment interests and countervailing interests served by judicial independence that are also of constitutional magnitude. In addition, the decision below adopted an unprecedented "precise" tailoring requirement that makes it effectively impossible for States to impose meaningful restrictions upon partisan activities in supposedly nonpartisan judicial elections, or to ensure meaningful insulation of judges from their donors. For these reasons, this Court's review of the decision below is essential to the continued smooth functioning of the state judicial systems over which the members of *Amicus* preside.

ARGUMENT

I. THE DECISION BELOW INJECTS UNCERTAINTY INTO THE JUDICIAL ELECTION PROCEDURES THAT ARE EMPLOYED BY THIRTY-NINE STATES

In striking down Minnesota's partisan activity and personal solicitation restrictions, the Eighth Circuit confessed a "bias in favor of a system for the appointment of judges," *Republican Party of Minn. v. White*, 416 F.3d 738, 746 (8th Cir. 2005) (en banc), and in an earlier opinion the author of the decision recommended that Minnesota amend its Constitution to adopt such a system. *See Republican Party of Minn. v. Kelly*, 247 F.3d 854, 902 (8th Cir. 2001) (Beam, J., dissenting). But the large majority of States have persistently

declined to emulate the Federal Constitution by selecting judges through appointment. Accordingly, judicial independence in the state courts must be achieved by regulating rather than replacing the electoral process. The decision below has thrown such regulation into disarray.

A. Judicial Elections Are a Long-Standing and Widespread Feature of State Judicial Systems

The vast majority of States employ judicial election systems.[2] Today, fully thirty-nine States elect at least some of their judges,[3] and more than 85% of the state judges in the nation face elections.[4] Nearly all these thirty-nine States will

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[2] *See* AMERICAN JUDICATURE SOC'Y, JUDICIAL SELECTION IN THE STATES: APPELLATE AND GENERAL JURISDICTION COURTS (2004), www.ajs.org/js/JudicialSelectionCharts.pdf.

[3] These thirty-nine States utilize a variety of judicial election systems. Thirty-two of them initially select at least some of their judges in contestable elections in which candidates run against an open field or an incumbent. *See id.* Among these States, eighteen use nonpartisan elections and thirteen use partisan elections. *See id.* One other State—Indiana—uses both since it varies election systems by county. *See id.* In addition, seventeen States employ retention systems in which judges are initially appointed but then run uncontested in nonpartisan retention elections where voters can vote yes or no on further terms. *See id.* Nine of these States use this method for some judges and contestable elections for others. *See id.* For example, California uses appointment and retention for its appeals courts while selecting trial court judges through nonpartisan contestable elections. *See id.* Altogether, thirty-two States employ some form of nonpartisan election, whether contestable or retention. *See id.* In recent years, efforts to move from election to retention systems have been rejected as voters and lawmakers have voiced a strong preference for contestable elections. *See* Seth Anderson, *Examining the Decline in Support for Merit Selection in the States*, 67 ALB. L. REV. 793, 793-98 (2004).

[4] *See* AMERICAN BAR ASS'N, REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE ON LAWYERS' POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS PART TWO 3 n.1 (1998).

hold some form of judicial election in 2006, thirty of them for their highest courts.[5]

State judicial elections date back to the mid-nineteenth century, when many States turned to judicial elections to avoid corruption and to reduce the partisan influence associated with judicial appointments under the so-called "spoils system." *See* Kermit L. Hall, *The Judiciary on Trial: State Constitutional Reform and the Rise of an Elected Judiciary, 1846-1860*, 44 HISTORIAN 337, 342-47 (1983). Reformers supporting judicial elections believed that elected judges would be more "free from the corrosive effects of politics and able to restrain legislative power." *Id.* at 343.

For many States, however, this belief proved to be illusory because political parties were able to influence the judiciary through their control over nominations and their power in partisan elections. *See* F. Andrew Hanssen, *Learning About Judicial Independence: Institutional Change in the State Courts*, 33 J. LEGAL STUD. 431, 450-51 (2004). The next generation of reformers therefore sought to reduce party influence by making many judicial elections nonpartisan. *Id.* Some States went further by adopting retention election systems. *Id.* at 451-53.

Since the early twentieth century, some reformers have sought to persuade States to abandon judicial elections altogether and return to appointment systems. In 1906, then-Professor Roscoe Pound advocated the elimination of judicial elections, warning the American Bar Association that "compelling judges to become politicians . . . has almost destroyed the traditional respect for the bench." Roscoe Pound, The Causes of Popular Dissatisfaction with the Administration of Justice, Address Delivered at the Annual Convention of the

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[5] *See* JUSTICE AT STAKE CAMPAIGN, SCHEDULED SUPREME COURT ELECTIONS 2006-2008 (2005), http://www.justiceatstake.org/files/SCElections06to08.pdf.

American Bar Association (1906), *reprinted in* 46 J. AM. JUDICATURE SOC'Y 55, 66 (1962).

Such efforts have not succeeded: one hundred years ago roughly 86% of state judges were elected; today the number is 87%. *See* Roy A. Schotland, *To the Endangered Species List, Add: Nonpartisan Judicial Elections*, 39 WILLAMETTE L. REV. 1397, 1401 n.24 (2003). Moreover, despite renewed efforts in recent years, States have made no movement to end contestable judicial elections. *Id.* To the contrary, ballot measures supporting judicial appointment have been resoundingly defeated. *See* Roy A. Schotland, *Financing Judicial Elections, 2000: Change and Challenge*, 2001 L. REV. MICH. ST. U. DET. C.L. 849, 886-90 (2001). Thus, judicial elections are highly likely to remain a feature of state judicial systems for the foreseeable future.

B. State Judicial Systems Urgently Need Guidance On the Scope of First Amendment Limits on Judicial Elections

The decision below exemplifies the confusion the States and lower federal courts are experiencing over which judicial election restrictions the First Amendment permits in the wake of this Court's decision in *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002). *White* struck down a prohibition on statements by judicial candidates "announcing" their views on issues likely to come before them. *See id.* at 788. *White* was a narrow decision: the restriction it invalidated was one that only nine States still had and no State had ever enforced. *See id.* at 773 n.5 (noting that other jurisdictions had repealed the announce clause). And in reaching this narrow result, this Court cautioned that "we neither assert nor imply that the First Amendment requires campaigns for judicial office to sound the same as those for legislative office." *Id.* at 783.

Yet some courts, like the Eighth Circuit below, have read *White* broadly to prohibit virtually all regulation of judicial

elections that touches upon First Amendment interests. For example, the Eleventh Circuit has held (*sua sponte*) that the Court's decision in *White* prohibits all restrictions upon personal solicitation by judicial candidates. *See Weaver v. Bonner*, 309 F.3d 1312, 1322-23 (11th Cir. 2002), *reh'g and reh'g en banc denied*, 57 F.App'x 416 (11th Cir. 2003).[6] Other courts, by contrast, have understood *White* to permit States to impose restrictions preserving judicial independence. *See In re Dunleavy*, 838 A.2d 338, 349-51 (Me. 2003) (upholding prohibition on contribution to, or soliciting funds for, political organizations); *In re Raab*, 793 N.E.2d 1287, 1290-93 (N.Y. 2003) (upholding prohibition on partisan political activities).

In light of these conflicts among the courts, state officials cannot now be certain of the constitutionality of restrictions on judicial candidates during judicial elections. Unless reviewed and clarified by this Court, therefore, the decision below will cause disruption to the conduct of state judicial elections and potential damage to the public's perception of elected judges and of the state judiciaries as institutions.

II. ENSURING THE INDEPENDENCE OF STATE JUDGES FROM POLITICS SERVES COMPELLING INTERESTS

The principle of judicial independence is as old as the Republic. The Declaration of Independence lamented that the British monarch had "made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and pay-

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[6] Other courts have extended *White* to require the invalidation of canons that forbid candidates from promising to rule in a particular manner. *See, e.g., Alaska Right to Life Political Action Comm. v. Feldman*, 380 F. Supp. 2d 1080, 1083 (D. Alaska 2005); *North Dakota Family Alliance, Inc. v. Bader*, 361 F. Supp. 2d 1021, 1038-39 (D.N.D. 2005); *Family Trust Found. of Ky., Inc. v. Wolnitzek*, 345 F. Supp. 2d 672, 704 (E.D. Ky. 2004); *cf. In re Watson*, 794 N.E.2d 1, 8 (N.Y. 2003).

ment of their salaries." THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE para. 11 (U.S. 1776). The United States Constitution accordingly provided that federal judges would "hold their Offices during good Behaviour" and that their compensation "shall not be diminished during their Continuance in Office." U.S. CONST. art III, § 1. This principle was not limited to the federal judiciary during the founding period: as the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780 stated, "It is the right of every citizen to be tried by judges as free, impartial, and independent as the lot of humanity will admit." MASS. CONST. pt. 1, art. XXIX.

Judicial independence serves three compelling ends, each of constitutional magnitude: ensuring the rule of law, maintaining the separation of powers, and guaranteeing fair and impartial process to each litigant.

A. State Judiciaries Must Uphold the Rule of Law

Even when elected, "[j]udges remain different from legislators . . . in ways that bear on the strength of the state's interest in restricting their freedom of speech." *Buckley v. Ill. Judicial Inquiry Bd.*, 997 F.2d 224, 228 (7th Cir. 1993). While politicians are representatives of the people and must be responsive to the popular will, judges must uphold the rule of law without regard to their personal predilections or the interests of the voters. *See Chisom v. Roemer*, 501 U.S. 380, 411 (1991) (Scalia, J., dissenting); *see also Confirmation Hearing on the Nomination of John G. Roberts, Jr., to be Chief Justice of the United States Before the S. Comm. on the Judiciary*, 109th Cong., S. Hrg. 109-158, at 379 (2005) ("Judges are not politicians. They cannot promise to do certain things in exchange for votes.").

Inherent in the concept of the rule of law as embodied in our federal and state constitutions is the notion that courts are to decide cases in accord solely with the law and facts, uninfluenced by judges' political affiliations, financial debts,

or other improper influences. For this reason, the qualifications and selection processes prescribed by federal and state constitutions for judicial office are different from those for political office.[7] States with judicial elections have no less interest than the federal system in courts that uphold the rule of law without regard to partisan influence.

B. State Judiciaries Must Be Independent of the Legislative and Executive Branches

Independence of the judiciary by definition requires lack of dependence upon the other branches. As Alexander Hamilton wrote in The Federalist, "liberty can have nothing to fear from the judiciary alone, but would have everything to fear from its union with either of the other departments." THE FEDERALIST NO. 78, at 466 (Alexander Hamilton) (Clinton Rossiter ed., 1961). Indeed, according to Chief Justice Marshall, "the greatest scourge an angry Heaven ever inflicted upon an ungrateful and sinning people, was an ignorant, a corrupt, or a *dependent* Judiciary." *O'Donoghue v. United States*, 289 U.S. 516, 532 (1933) (quoting 1829-30 Virginia State Convention). Accordingly, restrictions on state judicial election procedures designed to ensure judicial independence serve a compelling interest in preserving the separation of powers.

C. State Judiciaries Must Accord Fairness and Impartiality to Individual Litigants

Insulating judges from the winds of politics ultimately protects individual rights. As the Framers recognized, "[t]he complete independence of the courts of justice is peculiarly essential" because in a constitutional democracy, the judicial branch checks the political branches by protecting minority rights. THE FEDERALIST NO. 78, at 466 (Alexander Hamilton) (Clinton Rossiter ed., 1961); *see* BERNARD BAILYN, THE IDEO-

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[7] For example, all States grant judges longer terms than other elective offices. *See* AMERICAN JUDICATURE SOC'Y, *supra*.

LOGICAL ORIGINS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION 74-75 (1967) (recounting the Founders' view that without an independent judiciary "it would be ridiculous to look for strict impartiality [or] to expect that power should be confined within its legal limits, and right and justice done" (internal quotation marks omitted)). This is an interest of constitutional magnitude, as the Due Process Clause guarantees a "'fair trial in a fair tribunal'" with "no actual bias . . . or interest in the outcome" of the case. *Bracy v. Gramley*, 520 U.S 899, 904-05 (1997) (quoting *Withrow v. Larkin*, 421 U.S. 35, 46 (1975)).

In an analogous context, this Court has recognized a compelling interest in ensuring that Executive Branch officials execute the law "without bias or favoritism for or against any political party or group or the members thereof" and found this interest sufficient under the First Amendment to justify restrictions on election-related speech. *See U.S. Civil Serv. Comm'n v. Nat'l Ass'n of Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. 548, 564-65 (1973); *accord Broadrick v. Oklahoma*, 413 U.S. 601, 606, 616-17 (1973); *United Pub. Workers v. Mitchell*, 330 U.S. 75, 99-104 (1947). Surely if the neutral execution of the law is a compelling interest, neutral adjudication under law is compelling as well.

III. THIS COURT SHOULD CLARIFY THAT THE FIRST AMENDMENT PERMITS STATES TO ADVANCE THESE INTERESTS BY RESTRICTING PARTISAN ACTIVITY AND DIRECT SOLICITATION BY JUDICIAL CANDIDATES

In striking down Minnesota's partisan activity and direct solicitation restrictions, the decision below imposed an unprecedented and draconian standard of review. *Amicus* respectfully submits that nothing in *White* dictates such an analysis. Unlike the restrictions on partisan association and monetary contributions at issue here, *White* involved a direct limit upon the content of judicial candidates' core political

speech. *See White*, 536 U.S. at 792-93 (Kennedy, J., concurring) (noting that the announce clause was a content-based restriction). Very different interests are involved when a State limits judicial candidates' partisan activities. Such restrictions are aimed at protecting the independence of judicial decision making, not at preventing the flow of information to the public. Limiting judicial candidates' personal solicitations of campaign funds likewise differs from directly limiting campaign speech.

The lower court's stringent scrutiny departed from basic constitutional principles in two other respects as well. First, in holding that a State lacks any compelling interest in protecting judges from partisan political influence, *see White*, 416 F.3d at 753 n.7, the lower court failed to accord appropriate respect for State autonomy within the federal system. States are sovereign entities, and although they have ceded some of their sovereign authority to the federal government, they retain "wide authority to set up their state and local governments as they wish." *McMillian v. Monroe County, Ala.*, 520 U.S. 781, 795 (1997). They retain in particular the authority to prescribe the manner in which they select judges. *See Gregory v. Ashcroft*, 501 U.S. 452, 458 (1991) (noting that, even where fundamental constitutional interests are at stake, "[the Court's] scrutiny will not be so demanding" if a State's prerogative in designing the qualifications for its judges is at issue).

Second, by requiring that the restrictions be as "*precisely* tailored as possible," 416 F.3d at 751 (emphasis in original), the lower court failed to accord appropriate weight to the countervailing constitutional considerations that are at stake in *judicial* elections as opposed to other political contexts. "[W]here constitutionally protected interests lie on both sides of the legal equation . . . there is no place for a strong presumption against constitutionality, of the sort often thought to accompany the words 'strict scrutiny.'" *Nixon v. Shrink Mo. Gov't PAC*, 528 U.S. 377, 400 (2000) (Breyer, J., concur-

ring). In this setting, this Court should apply more flexible scrutiny than did the court below, determining whether the State has appropriately balanced the competing constitutional considerations in light of historical experience and practical imperatives. This is especially so in the electoral context, where there can well be "a narrow area in which the First Amendment permits freedom of expression to yield to the extent necessary for the accommodation of another constitutional right." *Burson v. Freeman*, 504 U.S. 191, 213 (1992) (Kennedy, J., concurring) (upholding a restriction on political signs near polling places); *see id.* at 198-211 (plurality opinion); *Anderson v. Celebrezze*, 460 U.S. 780, 788-90 (1983); *Storer v. Brown*, 415 U.S. 724, 730 (1974). Under such appropriate scrutiny, both restrictions at issue should be upheld.

A. Partisan Activity Restrictions Directly Advance Compelling Interests

Nineteen States with contestable judicial elections have chosen to conduct them on a nonpartisan basis.[8] In such elections, ballots do not designate the partisan affiliation of the judicial candidates,[9] and candidates qualify for the ballot by

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[8] *See* ARIZ. CONST. art. VI, § 12(A); ARK. CODE ANN. § 7-10-102(a)-(b) (2005); CAL. CONST. art. II, § 6(a), art. VI, § 16(a)-(b); FLA. STAT. § 105.011(2) (2005); GA. CODE ANN. § 21-2-138 (2005); IDAHO CONST. art. VI, § 7; IND. CODE §§ 33-33-2-9(a), 33-33-82-31 (2005); KY. CONST. § 117; MINN. STAT. § 204B.06(6) (2005); MISS. CODE ANN. § 23-15-976 (2005); MONT. CODE ANN. § 13-14-111 (2005); NEV. REV. STAT. § 293.195 (2005); N.C. GEN. STAT. §§ 163-321, 163-322 (2005); N.D. CENT. CODE §§ 16.1-06-08, 16.11-11-08 (2005); OKLA. CONST. art. VII, § 9; OR. REV. STAT. § 254.005(9) (2003); S.D. CONST. art. V, § 7; WASH. REV. CODE § 29A.52.231 (2005); WIS. STAT. § 5.60(1)(a) (2005).

The States that use retention elections operate them on a nonpartisan basis as well. *See supra* note 3.

[9] *See, e.g.*, IDAHO CODE ANN. § 34-905 (2005); NEV. REV. STAT. § 293.267(3)(b) (2004); WASH. REV. CODE § 29A.36.171(2) (2005); *see also* UTAH CONST. art. VIII, § 9 (providing for nonpartisan retention ballots).

petition, by running in nonpartisan primaries, or by incumbency.[10]

States choose to conduct judicial elections in nonpartisan fashion principally in order to protect judges from partisan political influences that would compromise the independence of their judgments. As early reformers recognized, parties can exercise great power over judges elected in partisan elections by wielding control over the nomination process and influence over general elections. Sometimes this power manifests itself in appointments for guardians, receivers, and other positions that elected judges in partisan systems dole out to party loyalists. *See, e.g.*, Geoffrey P. Miller, *Bad Judges*, 83 TEX. L. REV. 431, 436-37 (2004); *see also* Steven Zeidman, *To Elect or Not to Elect: A Case Study of Judicial Selection in New York City 1977-2002*, 37 U. MICH. J.L. REFORM 791, 826 (2004) (noting a party's refusal to renominate a judge who declined to hire a party-favored law clerk). At other times, partisan influence affects judicial decision making itself: according to one study, supreme court justices chosen in one state with partisan elections almost invariably voted for their party's interest in politically charged cases. *See* Jackson Williams, *Irreconcilable Principles: Law, Politics, and the Illinois Supreme Court*, 18 N. ILL. U. L. REV. 267, 290-91 (1998); *see also People ex. rel. Burris v. Ryan*, 634 N.E.2d 1066, 1067-68 (Ill. 1994) (Harrison, J., dissenting) (charging colleague with changing his vote in a redistricting case after deciding to change parties).

Nonpartisan judicial elections also serve compelling state interests in judicial impartiality by focusing voter attention away from partisan affiliation and onto the qualifications and legal ability of the candidates. Because of limited knowl-

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[10] *See, e.g.*, GA. CODE ANN. §§ 21-2-132(b)-(c), 21-2-138 (2005); MINN. STAT. §§ 204D.12(a), 204D.08(6) (2005); N.C. GEN. STAT. § 163-322 (2005).

edge, time or interest, voters in partisan judicial elections frequently ignore the legal abilities of candidates and vote solely upon party affiliation. *See* Lawrence Baum, *Judicial Elections and Judicial Independence: The Voter's Perspective*, 64 OHIO ST. L.J. 13, 19-25 (2003). The most celebrated victim of this phenomenon was Thomas Cooley, who served on the Michigan Supreme Court for twenty years and was widely seen as one of the leading judges of his era. *See, e.g.*, Paul D. Carrington, *Law as "The Common Thoughts of Men": The Law-Teaching and Judging of Thomas McIntyre Cooley*, 49 STAN. L. REV. 495, 495-97 (1997). Nevertheless, he was unseated in 1885 in an election in which Democrats won every contested seat. *See id.* at 496, 545; *see also* Kent Gernander, *Judicial Elections*, 57 BENCH & BAR OF MINN. 5, 5 (2000) (recounting a similar partisan fate suffered by the highly regarded Minnesota Supreme Court Justice William Mitchell).

Nonpartisan judicial elections provide a measure of stability to state judiciaries that helps preserve the reality and appearance of the rule of law. In partisan elections, incumbent (and therefore experienced) judges are more than twice as likely to be defeated than in nonpartisan elections. *See* Anthony Champagne, *Tort Reform and Judicial Selection*, 38 LOY. L.A. L. REV. 1483, 1493 (2005). Consequently, as Thomas Cooley's fate shows, in States with partisan judicial elections, when political winds shift or strong candidates run at the top of the ticket, entire judiciaries can change overnight. *See also* Schotland, *Financing Judicial Elections*, *supra*, at 868 (noting that President Bush's landslide victory in Alabama allowed Alabama Republicans to take ten out of eleven statewide judicial seats); Anthony Champagne, *Political Parties and Judicial Elections*, 34 LOY. L.A. L. REV. 1411, 1413, 1416-17 (2001) (discussing similar results in Texas judicial elections).

Finally, nonpartisan judicial elections serve compelling state interests in judicial impartiality and separation of powers because they are less likely than partisan elections to be distorted by partisan policy goals. In partisan judicial elections, candidates have sometimes used hot-button issues like abortion and gun control to motivate the party's base and increase turnout, even if judges are unlikely to face those issues. *See, e.g.*, Mike France *et al.*, *The Battle Over the Courts*, BUS. WK., Sept. 27, 2004, at 36. For example, in a 2002 North Carolina Supreme Court race a candidate promised to "support our Republican agenda" on abortion and other issues, even though the North Carolina Supreme Court had not had an abortion case before it for years. *See* Michelle T. Friedland, *Disqualification or Suppression: Due Process and the Response to Judicial Campaign Speech*, 104 COLUM. L. REV. 563, 618-19 (2004).[11]

Restrictions on partisan activity by judicial candidates should be upheld when they directly advance these vital state interests, even if they cannot be "precisely" tailored to serve such interests because there are interests of constitutional magnitude on both sides. Where States seek to advance compelling interests in a politically neutral and independent judiciary that can ensure the rule of law, and are forced to balance those interests against other constitutional interests, the First Amendment should not be read to require States to make a stark choice between conducting judicial elections in

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[11] The contentiousness seen in nonpartisan races explains why they are, on average, approximately three times more expensive than nonpartisan elections. *See* DEBORAH GOLDBERG *ET AL.*, THE NEW POLITICS OF JUDICIAL ELECTIONS 2002 21 (2002); *see also* DEBORAH GOLDBERG *ET AL.*, THE NEW POLITICS OF JUDICIAL ELECTIONS 2004 26-27 (2004) (reporting more than $4.7 million in party contributions to two candidates in an Illinois race that cost the candidates more than $9 million); Schotland, *Financing Judicial Elections*, *supra*, at 874-75 (recounting roughly $4 million in party spending on issue ads during one Michigan election).

a partisan fashion and doing away with judicial elections altogether.

Partisan activity restrictions directly advance the above state interests. Indeed, without partisan activity restrictions, nominally nonpartisan judicial elections can readily be overtaken by politics as usual. Recent elections in Ohio illustrate the problem. Although Ohio uses nonpartisan ballots in general judicial elections, it does not significantly restrict partisan activities in those elections: candidates are free to speak at political gatherings and seek party endorsements, and they may identify themselves as a party's nominee. *See* OHIO CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 7B(2)(g), 7B(3)(a). Recent judicial elections in Ohio have been very partisan, with political parties airing commercials of dubious accuracy attacking judicial candidates. *See, e.g.*, David Goldberger, *The Power of Special Interest Groups to Overwhelm Judicial Election Campaigns*, 72 U. CIN. L. REV. 1, 9 n.49 (2003).

Michigan has had a similar experience with partisan influence upon nominally nonpartisan elections. Like Ohio, Michigan uses nonpartisan ballots but allows judicial candidates to engage in partisan activities such as attending political gatherings and contributing to parties. *See* MICH. CODE OF JUD. CONDUCT Canon 7A(2). As in Ohio, recent judicial elections in Michigan have featured numerous party-sponsored commercials attacking judicial candidates.[12]

To avoid this sort of conduct, many States with nonpartisan judicial elections, like Minnesota, restrict the partisan activities of judicial candidates. Some of these restrictions parallel existing ethical rules for sitting judges. For example, both state and federal judges are generally admonished to refrain

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[12] *See, e.g.*, Schotland, *Financing Judicial Elections*, *supra*, at 871-72 (describing TV commercials run by both parties); BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE, REDUCING INJUDICIOUSNESS IN JUDICIAL ELECTIONS (July 2000), www.brennancenter.org/resources/resources_act_injudic.html (similar).

from political activity and specifically prohibited from holding office in political organizations, making speeches for such organizations, or contributing to them. *See* CODE OF COND. FOR UNITED STATES JUDGES, Canon 7A(1)-(3).[13] Nearly all States with nonpartisan judicial elections simply extend such ethical prohibitions one step further by similarly barring judicial candidates from holding party office or from

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[13] Forty-eight states limit the partisan political activities of sitting judges. *See* ALA. CANONS OF JUD. ETHICS Canon 7A(1); ALASKA CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1); ARIZ. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1); ARK. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1); CAL. CODE OF JUD. ETHICS Canon 5A; COLO. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 7A(1); CONN. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 7; DEL. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 7; FLA. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 7A(1); GA. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 7A(1); HAW. REV. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1); IDAHO CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1); ILL. CODE OF JUD. COND., Rule 67, Canon 7A(1); IND. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1); IOWA CODE ANN. Rule 51, Canon 7A; KAN. SUP. CT. RULE 601A, Canon 5A(1); KY. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A; LA. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 7A(1); ME. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1); MD. RULE 16-813, Canon 5A(1); MASS. SUP. JUD. CT. RULE 3:09, Canon 5A(1); MICH. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 7A(1); MINN. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1); MISS. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1); MO. SUP. CT. RULE 2.03, Canon 5A; MONT. CANONS OF JUD. ETHICS Canon 28; NEB. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1); NEV. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1); N.H. SUP. CT. RULE 38 Canon 5A; N.J. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 7; N.M. CODE OF JUD. COND. Rule 21-700A(3); N.Y. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5(A)(1); N.C. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 7C(1); N.D. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1); OHIO CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 7(B)(2)(a)-(b); OKLA. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1); PA. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 7A; R.I. SUP. CT. RULES art. VI Canon 5A(1); S.C. APP. CT. RULE 501, Canon 5A(1); S.D. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1); TENN. SUP. CT. RULE 10, Canon 5A(1); UTAH CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5B; VT. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1); VA. CANONS OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1); WASH. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 7(A)(1); W. VA. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1); WIS. SUP. CT. RULE 60.06(2)(b); WYO. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1).

making speeches on behalf of political parties,[14] and many also prohibit making contributions to political parties.[15]

Other partisan activity restrictions prevent judicial candidates from undermining the nonpartisan nature of the elections. For example, ten States prohibit judicial candidates in nonpartisan elections from declaring their party affiliations.[16] Others prohibit judicial candidates from seeking party endorsements,[17] and still other States prohibit candidates from endorsing other political candidates.[18]

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[14] *See, e.g.*, ARIZ. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(a)-(b); ARK. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(a), 5A(1)(c); CAL. CODE OF JUD. ETHICS Canon 5A(1)-(2); FLA. STAT. § 105.071(5), 105.071(9) (2005); GA. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 7A(1)(a)-(b); IDAHO CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(a), 5A(1)(c); IND. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(a), 5A(1)(c); KY. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(a)-(b); MINN. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(a), 5A(1)(c); MISS. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(a)-(b); NEV. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(a), 5A(1)(c); N.D. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(a), 5A(1)(c); OKLA. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(a), 5A(1)(c); S.D. CODE OF JUD. COND. 5A(1)(a), 5A(1)(c); WASH. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 7A(1)(a)-(b); WIS. SUP. CT. RULE 60.06(2)(b)-(c).

[15] *See* CAL. CODE OF JUD. ETHICS Canon 5A(3); FLA. STAT. § 105.071(6) (2005); IDAHO CODE OF JUD. COND. 5A(1)(e); KY. CODE OF JUD. COND. 5A(1)(c); MINN. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(e); N.D. CODE OF JUD. COND. 5A(1)(e); OKLA. CODE OF JUD. COND. 5A(1)(d); WASH. CODE OF JUD. COND. 7A(1)(c); WIS. SUP. CT. RULE 60.06(2)(b)(3).

[16] *See* Pet. at 17 n.8; *see also* OKLA. STAT. tit. 20, § 1404.1(3) (2005).

[17] *See* Pet. at 17 n.8 (identifying three states).

[18] *See* ARK. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(b); CAL. CODE OF JUD. ETHICS Canon 5A(2); FLA. STAT. § 105.071(4) (2005); GA. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 7A(1)(b); IDAHO CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(b); IND. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(b); KY. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A1(b); MINN. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(b); MISS. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(b); NEV. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(b); N.D. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(b); OKLA. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(b); S.D. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5A(1)(b); WASH. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 7A(1)(b); WIS. SUP. CT. RULES 60.06(2)(b)(4).

Contrary to the lower court's opinion, it makes no difference in the judicial election context that partisan activity restrictions like Minnesota's might distinguish between political parties and special interest groups. *See White*, 416 F.3d at 753 n.7, 759-60. Because political parties select and endorse candidates, set political agendas, and wield special power in elections, they have influence over political candidates and legislative outcomes that vastly exceeds that of any interest group. *See, e.g., McConnell v. FEC*, 540 U.S. 93, 145-46 (2003). Thus partisan activity restrictions on judicial candidates preserve the separation of judicial from legislative and executive power in a way that is irrelevant to private interest groups. *See id.* at 145 (noting that parties are unique because they "enjoy a special relationship and unity of interest" with legislative officeholders).

B. Personal Solicitation Restrictions Directly Advance Compelling State Interests

Prior to *White*, twenty-nine States prohibited judicial candidates from personally soliciting campaign contributions. They did so in order to prevent the actual or perceived bias that occurs when donors become litigants. *See* Pet. at 13-16 & n.5. The decision below conceded that Minnesota has a compelling interest in preventing such bias from infecting judicial decision-making. But it concluded that it was unnecessary to restrict judicial candidates from personally signing donation solicitation letters or soliciting money from "large" groups to serve that interest because campaign committees were already barred from informing candidates of the identities of individuals asked to contribute. *See* MINN. CODE OF JUD. COND. Canon 5B(2).

This Court should review the lower court's application of such stringent review. The court's reasoning erroneously ignores the States' compelling interest in preserving the appearance of justice and judicial integrity. *See, e.g., Aetna Life Ins. Co. v. Lavoie*, 475 U.S. 813, 825 (1986); *Cox v.*

Louisiana, 379 U.S. 559, 565 (1965); *In re Raab*, 793 N.E.2d 1287, 1291 (N.Y. 2003). Even assuming candidates studiously avoid learning the identities of potential donors, the appearance of justice is still undermined because recipients of solicitation letters have no way of knowing that the candidates signing the letters are unaware of their identities. Indeed, the ordinary message communicated by a signature conveys the opposite conclusion. Likewise, although it might be plausible that a candidate soliciting money from a "large" group will not know everyone in the group, it is implausible that the candidate will know nobody. Indeed, since most judicial campaign contributions come from lawyers and litigants with business before the courts, *see* GOLDBERG *ET AL.*, NEW POLITICS 2002, *supra*, at 18, it defies reason to believe that the size of a group will preserve the attendees' anonymity.

Moreover, the decision below ignores the "unique regulatory difficulties" that are involved in restricting personal solicitations, which are "'not visible or otherwise open to public scrutiny.'" *See Zauderer v. Office of Disciplinary Counsel of the Supreme Court of Ohio*, 471 U.S. 626, 641 (1985) (quoting *Ohralik v. Ohio State Bar Ass'n*, 436 U.S. 447, 466 (1978)) (distinguishing lawyer advertising from in-person solicitation). The First Amendment does not require the States to assume that conduct behind closed doors is lawful.

It is difficult to imagine any solicitation restriction that would survive the scrutiny applied by the decision below. As these restrictions lie at the very core of States' efforts to preserve a legitimate and unbiased judiciary, the Court should accept this case to clarify that States may impose meaningful limitations on campaign fundraising.

CONCLUSION

The petition for a writ of certiorari should be granted.

Respectfully submitted,

ROY A. SCHOTLAND
600 New Jersey Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 662-9098

KATHLEEN M. SULLIVAN
Counsel of Record
DANIEL H. BROMBERG
WILLIAM ADAMS
DANIEL ZAHEER
QUINN EMANUEL URQUHART
OLIVER & HEDGES, LLP
555 Twin Dolphin Drive,
Suite 560
Redwood Shores, CA 94065
(650) 801-5000

Counsel for Amicus Curiae
Conference of Chief Justices

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IN THE

Supreme Court of the United States

MARTHA HOLTON DIMICK, CHAIRPERSON,
MINNESOTA BOARD ON JUDICIAL STANDARDS, *et al.*,

Petitioners,

v.

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, *et al.*,

Respondents.

ON PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE EIGHTH CIRCUIT

BRIEF OF *AMICI CURIAE* FORMER CHIEF JUSTICES IN SUPPORT OF THE PETITION

CHARLES G. COLE
Counsel of Record
JOHN D. CLOPPER
JOHN P. NOLAN
STEPTOE & JOHNSON LLP
1330 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 429-6270

Attorneys for Former Chief Justices

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether a rule that prohibits judicial candidates from personally soliciting campaign contributions violates the First Amendment.

2. Whether a rule that prohibits judicial candidates from engaging in partisan political activities violates the First Amendment.

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INTEREST OF THE *AMICI CURIAE*[1]

Amici Curiae are eighteen former Chief Justices from fifteen States.[2] They have an abiding interest in upholding the independence, impartiality, and stature of the state judicial systems over which they have presided.

Amici are deeply concerned with the impact of the decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit in this case. Based on their collective experience, *amici* believe that the elimination of ethical constraints on solicitation of funds and partisan political activity will lead to a downward spiral in conduct during judicial elections, with a concomitant diminution in public respect for the courts. *Amici* further believe that the state and federal courts have reached conflicting results and that this tension will create widespread uncertainty and distracting litigation during future judicial elections. *Amici* therefore urge this Court to grant review and resolve the issues presented in the petition before the next election cycle.

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[1] Counsel of record for both petitioners and respondents have consented to the filing of this brief in letters that have been lodged with the clerk. No counsel representing a party authored this brief in whole or in part, and no person or entity other than the *amici curiae* or their counsel made a monetary contribution to the preparation or submission of this brief.

[2] The former Chief Justices are: Perry O. Hooper, Sr. (Alabama); Thomas Zlaket (Arizona); Jack W. Holt, Jr. (Arkansas); Malcolm M. Lucas (California); Major L. Harding (Florida); Stephen H. Grimes (Florida); Benjamin K. Miller (Illinois); Vincent L. McKusick (Maine); Conrad L. Mallet, Jr. (Michigan); A.M. (Sandy) Keith (Minnesota); William Charles Hastings (Nebraska); James G. Exum, Jr. (North Carolina); Henry Frye (North Carolina); Burley B. Mitchell, Jr. (North Carolina); Robert A. Miller (South Dakota); Harry L. Carrico (Virginia); Robert F. Utter (Washington); Nathan S. Heffernan (Wisconsin).

The petition seeks review of a decision holding unconstitutional two provisions of the Minnesota Canons of Judicial Conduct. The solicitation clause, Canon 5B(2), prohibits a judicial candidate from personally soliciting campaign contributions. The partisan activities clause, embodied in Canons 5A(1) and 5B(1), prohibits a judicial candidate from identifying himself as a member of a political party, speaking at political party gatherings, and seeking or accepting an endorsement from a political party. The Eighth Circuit found each of these clauses unconstitutional under the First Amendment.

Amici respectfully believe that this decision is in error. It also has the kind of widespread effect that warrants this Court's review. That impact is reflected in the range of States represented by these *amici*, who have served as Chief Justices of the States of Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Florida, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Carolina, South Dakota, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.

Amici speak from experience. As Chief Justices, they were responsible for the integrity of the courts in their respective States. Their responsibilities included the promulgation of ethical rules for judges, interpretation of those rules, and the application of the rules in particular cases. In addition, each of the former Chief Justices comes from a State where some judges are elected. Finally, nearly all *amici* have had the personal experience of participating in the electoral process, and confronting directly the sensitive issues of fundraising and the role of political parties.

Based on their collective experience, *amici* believe that the ethical constraints at issue here serve compelling interests. Without them, judges running for office would be free to take a personal role in soliciting contributions from the litigants and lawyers who come before them. Even in the absence of actual corruption, such personal requests for

money will erode public confidence in the impartiality of the judiciary.

At the same time, restraints on judicial partisan activities preserve the public's confidence in the neutrality of the courts. Without effective restraints, nonpartisan elections are impossible. Judicial elections will feature all of the partisanship of other elections, and it will appear that judges owe their success to the political parties whose endorsements they have sought and accepted. This is a very real threat to the effective functioning of the judicial branch, which has a special responsibility to remain independent, so that it may assess the validity of actions taken by the political branches and protect the rights of political minorities. Judges whose election campaigns are predicated on their allegiance to particular parties will necessarily have difficulty in maintaining the reality and perception of independence from the political branches.

These consequences have been felt already, but the decision below portends even more. Many States with judicial elections have rules similar to the ones in this case. The Eighth Circuit's decision places these state rules in doubt. And the lingering uncertainty over the validity of these regulations will spawn confusion, conflict, and claims of unfairness in every judicial election until the constitutional ground rules are clarified.

Amici, therefore, urge this Court to grant the petition now and resolve the issues presented.

STATEMENT OF PROCEEDINGS

This is the second occasion for Supreme Court review in this case. Respondents originally challenged three provisions of the Minnesota Canons of Judicial Conduct: the two clauses at issue here and the "announce clause," which prohibited a judicial candidate from announcing his or her views on disputed legal issues. The Court of Appeals upheld

all three clauses. *Republican Party of Minn. v. Kelly*, 247 F.3d 854 (8th Cir. 2001). Respondents then filed a petition for certiorari, seeking review of the rulings with respect to two of the clauses—the announce clause and the partisan activities clause—while not presenting the solicitation clause.

This Court granted certiorari, but limited its grant to the question concerning the announce clause. 534 U.S. 1054 (2001). The Court subsequently held the announce clause unconstitutional. *Republican Party of Minn. v. White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002). The Court concluded that the clause was not narrowly tailored to serve the asserted interest in impartiality, in the sense of lack of bias for or against either party to the proceeding, since the clause was aimed at speech on issues, not for or against particular parties. This Court warned, however, that it was "neither assert[ing] nor imply[ing] that the First Amendment requires campaigns for judicial office to sound the same as those for legislative office." *Id.* at 783.

On remand, a panel of the Eighth Circuit again upheld the solicitation and partisan activities clauses. *Republican Party of Minn. v. White*, 361 F.3d 1035 (8th Cir. 2004). After rehearing the case en banc, the Eighth Circuit struck down both clauses. 416 F.3d 738 (8th Cir. 2005). Relying on *White* and applying strict scrutiny, the majority found the restrictions both too broad and underinclusive in light of their justifications. Three judges dissented from the ruling on the partisan activities clause and four judges dissented on the solicitation clause.

The State parties thereafter filed the instant petition for certiorari, seeking review of the rulings on the solicitation and partisan activities clauses. *Amici* submit that this petition has merit and should be granted.

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE PETITION

I. THE BAN ON PERSONAL SOLICITATION RAISES AN ISSUE WORTHY OF REVIEW

The en banc decision of the Eighth Circuit striking down the solicitation clause raises fundamental questions of First Amendment law. The majority focused on the wrong precedent from this Court, applied an incorrect level of scrutiny, and missed the crucial state interest. Allowing judges to make personal solicitations for campaign funds permits the perception that justice can be bought. The solicitation clause thus plays a vital role in preserving public confidence in the judiciary.

At least twenty eight states have clauses prohibiting solicitation by judges. Multiple state supreme courts promulgating or applying these clauses have viewed them as constitutional and at least one federal circuit—the Third Circuit—has squarely upheld a solicitation clause. The decision of the Eighth Circuit (and a similar decision from the Eleventh Circuit) conflict with this substantial body of precedent. This Court should clarify the validity of these clauses immediately.

A. The Court of Appeals Erred In Striking Down The Solicitation Clause

The Eighth Circuit took as its framework for analysis this Court's decision in *White*. 416 F.3d at 748-54. "[U]pon further consideration of the . . . solicitation clause[] in light of *White*," it held that this clause did not survive strict scrutiny. *Id.* at 766. *White*, however, was not the right precedent for analyzing the solicitation clause.

The solicitation clause is about requests for money—specifically, whether judicial candidates may personally ask members of the public, including those who have appeared or might thereafter appear before them, for monetary

contributions. In a series of cases from *Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1 (1976), to *McConnell v. FEC*, 540 U.S. 93 (2003), the Court has addressed the regulation of monetary contributions and the manner in which those contributions are solicited. But rather than apply this established case law, the Eighth Circuit largely cast it aside, focusing instead on *White*.

Symptomatic of its difficulties, the Court of Appeals dismissed *McConnell* because "the Supreme Court, in *McConnell*, did not once cite *White* in the entirety of its 251-page opinion dealing with the corrupting influence of 'soft' money and the political communications such money can buy." 416 F.3d at 756 n.8. But *White*, of course, dealt only with the announce clause—an issue unique to judicial elections—and was not concerned at all with monetary contributions. It is therefore not surprising that the *McConnell* Court did not mention *White*.

Just as the Court of Appeals chose the wrong precedent, it applied the wrong standard of review. The majority applied strict scrutiny, reasoning that "[i]nsofar as the solicitation clause restricts the amount of funds a judicial candidate is able to expend on his or her political message, the regulation is of the same caliber as that struck down in *Buckley*." 416 F.3d at 764.

In *Buckley*, however, the Court applied a lower level of scrutiny to contribution limitations, and in fact upheld the limits. 424 U.S. at 23-36. Since *Buckley*, the Court has "consistently applied less rigorous scrutiny to contribution restrictions aimed at the prevention of corruption and the appearance of corruption." *McConnell*, 540 U.S. at 138 n.40. This principle applies to solicitation of contributions as well as the contributions themselves. *Id.* at 138 ("[F]or purposes of determining the level of scrutiny, it is irrelevant that Congress chose ... to regulate contributions on the demand rather than the supply side."); *FEC v. Nat'l Right to Work*

Comm., 459 U.S. 197, 206-11 (1982) (upholding a restriction on political action committees' solicitation of contributions).

The Eighth Circuit's theory—applying strict scrutiny to limitations on contributions because they affect the aggregate amount available for expenditure—conflicts with the entire body of case law recognizing a distinction between contribution and expenditure limits. *See, e.g., Buckley*, 424 U.S. at 23-36. It also misses the point that this particular solicitation clause is actually *less* restrictive than the contribution ceilings that the Court has upheld. The solicitation clause does not actually restrict the ability of potential donors to contribute to the judicial candidate's campaign, nor does it restrict the ability of a committee to solicit such contributions.

For all of these reasons, the solicitation clause should have been subjected to the much more lenient test of *McConnell*—whether it "satisfies the lesser demand of being closely drawn to match a sufficiently important interest." 540 U.S. at 136 (internal quotations omitted). As the dissenting judges below recognized, the standard of review is, at the very least, an issue "worthy of more attention." 416 F.3d at 783 n.22 (Gibson, J., dissenting).

Even applying strict scrutiny, however, the solicitation clause could have been upheld, had the Court of Appeals fully understood and credited Minnesota's underlying interest. Since *Buckley*, this Court has recognized the risk that candidates might be too willing to acquiesce in the wishes of contributors and the associated corrosive effect of the appearance of such bias. Both interests are especially compelling with respect to judicial elections. The Third Circuit has explained:

> It is no secret that . . . judicial campaigns must focus their solicitations for funds on members of the bar. This leads to the unseemly situation in which judges preside over

> cases in which the parties are represented by counsel who have contributed in varying amounts to the judicial campaigns.... There is no aspect of the electoral system of choosing judges that has drawn more vehement and justifiable criticism than the raising of campaign funds, particularly from lawyers and litigants likely to appear before the court.

Stretton v. Disciplinary Bd. of the Supreme Ct. of Pa., 944 F.2d 137, 145-46 (3d Cir. 1991).

The worst aspect of this problem is the personal involvement of the judicial candidate in the solicitation. It not only threatens the relationship between the judge and the potential donor, it projects a uniquely unwholesome image to the public. An umpire who asks the players on each team for money will not be seen as the right person to call the game. As the Supreme Court of Oregon reasoned:

> The impression created when a lawyer or potential litigant . . . contributes to the campaign of that judge is always unfortunate. . . . [T]he outside observer cannot but think that the lawyer or potential litigant either expects to get special treatment from the judge or, at the least, hopes to get such treatment. It follows that, if it is at all possible to do so, the spectacle of lawyers or potential litigants directly handing over money to judicial candidates should be avoided if the public is to have faith in the impartiality of its judiciary.

In re Fadeley, 802 P.2d 31, 41 (Or. 1990).

The Eighth Circuit majority agreed that impartiality as to parties could be a compelling interest, but only to the extent that a particular compromise of impartiality amounted to a denial of due process. 416 F.3d at 753. The majority then concluded that a contribution solicited in the fashion proposed by the plaintiffs would not amount to a due process violation because the committee would receive the funds and

the judge would not know about the source of the contribution. *Id.* at 765.

This factual conclusion was not appropriate in a summary judgment setting, but, more importantly, the basic premise of the reasoning is incorrect. The State's interest in assuring a fair and impartial hearing is not limited to preventing misconduct so egregious that it amounts to a denial of due process. *See* Petition at 15 (citing cases). States regularly do more to assure a fair judicial process than what is minimally required by the Fourteenth Amendment.

Perhaps most important, the Eighth Circuit considered only whether solicitation would lead to an *actual* bias. But, as this Court has repeatedly held, the State has an interest in guarding against the appearance, as well the actuality, of corruption. *FEC v. Nat'l Conservative Political Action Comm.*, 470 U.S. 480, 496-97 (1985); *FEC v. Colorado Republican Fed. Campaign Comm.*, 533 U.S. 431 (2001). Here, the State has a strong interest in avoiding any inference by the donor, the opponent, or the public at large that the judge was using his or her office as a means of exacting contributions. It is this threat to the appearance of impartiality that serves as the compelling foundation for the solicitation clause, and it is not discussed at all by the majority opinion.

B. The Decision Exacerbates Confusion Over Restrictions On Personal Solicitation

The en banc decision of the Court of Appeals deepens the confusion over the viability of solicitation rules among states that conduct judicial elections. At least twenty eight states currently ban personal solicitation by judicial candidates. *See* Petition at 13 (citing codes). The states' ability to enforce these prohibitions has been seriously jeopardized.

Two federal circuits have now struck down these rules. In *Weaver v. Bonner*, 309 F.3d 1312 (11th Cir. 2002), the

Eleventh Circuit concluded that this Court's decision in *White* required invalidation of Georgia's ban on personal solicitation. *Id.* at 1322-23. Its opinion contained no discussion of campaign contribution precedent, such as *Buckley*. The Eighth Circuit, in turn, relied on *Weaver*. 416 F.3d at 763. Together, these circuits encompass ten states that conduct judicial elections.

On the other hand, since *Buckley*, other courts have sustained solicitation clauses against First Amendment challenge. *See Stretton*, 944 F.2d at 145 (citing *Buckley* in upholding Pennsylvania's solicitation clause); *In re Fadeley*, 802 P.2d at 41 (citing *Buckley* in upholding Oregon's solicitation clause); *cf. McEntee v. Merit Sys. Prot. Bd.*, 404 F.3d 1320, 1325, 1335 n.10 (Fed. Cir.) (sustaining Hatch Act prohibition on personal solicitation by candidate for local office), *cert. denied*, 126 S. Ct. 381 (2005).

Following *White*, many state supreme courts amended their judicial codes to ensure consistency with the First Amendment principles articulated in the Court's opinion. But, notably, nearly all left their solicitation clauses undisturbed. *See, e.g.*, 42 Pa. Cons. Stat. Ann., Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7B(2) (amended Nov. 21, 2002) (leaving solicitation clause in place); Order, In re Amendment to Rule 10, Rules of the Tennessee Supreme Court (Tenn. Oct. 11, 2005) (leaving solicitation clause unchanged); Order, In re Amendment of Supreme Court Rules, No. 00-07, 2004 WI 134, 274 Wis. 2d xlvii (Wis. Oct. 29, 2004) (clarifying but not withdrawing prohibition on solicitation).[3]

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[3] Similarly, less than a month ago, the American Bar Association reaffirmed its belief in the constitutionality of the solicitation clause. *See* ABA Joint Comm'n to Evaluate the Model Code of Judicial Conduct, Final Draft Report, Rule 5.01(A)(8) (Dec. 14, 2005) (continuing to ban personal solicitation).

Even within the federal circuits that invalidated these rules, some States have changed them, others have not. For example, two of the three States in the Eleventh Circuit have dropped their prohibitions on personal solicitation in light of *Weaver*, *see* Ga. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7B(2) (amended June 7, 2004); Ala. Canons of Jud. Ethics, Canon 7B(4) (Aug. 25, 2004), while one has not. *See* Fla. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7C(1); Amendment to Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7 (Political Activity), No. SC01-1904 (Fla. Mar. 10, 2005) (leaving solicitation clause in place). In the Eighth Circuit, South Dakota eliminated its solicitation clause in the wake of the en banc ruling, S.D. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2) (amended Dec. 1, 2005), while the other four states with solicitation clauses have retained theirs. *See* N.D. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2); Ark. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2); Mo. S.Ct. Rule 2.03, Canon 5B(2); Neb. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5C(2).

Of course, some federal circuits have not spoken to this issue. However, in this context, federal courts rarely speak. State supreme courts have responsibility for promulgating and applying the ethical rules. Federal courts hear challenges to them only in injunction or declaratory judgment actions and frequently dismiss them on abstention grounds. *See Spargo v. N.Y. State Comm'n on Judicial Conduct*, 351 F.3d 65 (2d Cir. 2003), *cert. denied*, 541 U.S. 1085 (2004); *Allstate Ins. Co. v. West Virginia State Bar*, 233 F.3d 813 (4th Cir. 2000); *Butler v. Ala. Judicial Inquiry Comm'n*, 261 F.3d 1154, 1160 (11th Cir. 2001); *Griffen v. Arkansas Judicial Discipline & Disability Comm'n*, 266 F. Supp. 2d 898 (E.D. Ark. 2003). Hence, the actions of state courts in promulgating and applying their rules have special significance in this area.

The confusion in the courts has real consequences for those planning to compete for judicial office. Judicial candidates do not know how they or their opponents can

legitimately seek funds. As noted in the petition (at 11), thirty states will hold supreme court elections next year; the significant uncertainty surrounding this issue threatens the fairness of those elections. By any measure, this Court's consideration of the issue is warranted.

II. THE BAN ON PARTISAN ACTIVITIES RAISES AN ISSUE WORTHY OF REVIEW

The Eighth Circuit's ruling striking down Minnesota's restrictions on partisan activities also raises important, pressing issues requiring resolution by this Court. Again, the en banc majority took *White* as its lodestar, although the reasoning in that case did not apply. The majority gave short shrift to the decisions of this Court actually addressing restrictions on partisan activity by government employees. The majority did not recognize the critical importance of the state's interest in assuring a perception of judges as impartial decision-makers, without obligations to political parties.

The Eighth Circuit's ruling conflicts with a significant number of recent state court decisions upholding similar restrictions. As a result, the rules on judicial participation in partisan activities have become as confused and disputed as those on solicitation.

A. The Court of Appeals Erred In Striking Down The Partisan Activities Clause

At the core of the majority opinion is a misperception of the scope of *White*. The central problem that concerned the Court in *White* was the lack of fit between a direct restriction on speech about issues and the State's interest in preserving impartiality as to parties. The clause failed strict scrutiny because it was "barely tailored to serve that [lack of bias] interest *at all*, inasmuch as it does not restrict speech for or against particular *parties*, but rather speech for or against particular *issues*." *White*, 536 U.S. at 776. In contrast, the partisan activities clause regulates relationships between the

judge and certain parties—the political parties. Judge Gibson explained in his dissent:

> The threat to open-mindedness at which the partisan activities and solicitation clauses aim comes not from within the candidates, but from without and consists of the candidates placing themselves in debt to powerful and wide-reaching political organizations that can make or break them in each election. . . . The partisan activities and solicitation clauses regulate how certain speech affects a judicial candidate's relations with people, . . . not the candidate's relations with issues.

416 F.3d at 768.

Because the partisan activities clause is aimed at a different problem, *White* simply does not provide an answer to the constitutional question that the clause poses. But there is other, more relevant, precedent that strongly supports the constitutionality of the partisan activities clause. In *United States Civil Service Commission v. National Association of Letters Carriers*, 413 U.S. 548 (1973), this Court upheld the restraints of the Hatch Act on partisan activity by Executive Branch employees precisely because they are "expected to enforce the law and execute the programs of the Government without bias or favoritism for or against any political party or group or the members thereof." *Id.* at 565. The Court held that "to serve this great end of Government—the impartial execution of the laws—" it was permissible to prohibit, among other things, executive employees from running for office on partisan political tickets. *Id. Letter Carriers* was a strong precedent, pertinent to and perhaps decisive of the question before the Eighth Circuit, but was not considered in the majority opinion at all.

Of course, *Letter Carriers* dealt only with restrictions on employees of the executive branch of government. But the reasoning applies with even greater force to the judicial

branch. The central purpose of that separate branch is to provide a forum in which citizens may obtain a decision free of bias. Moreover, the judiciary is expected to perform functions that require independence from political parties. Elected state judges must review the validity of state laws under the state and federal constitutions; they must review actions of the state executive branch; and they must interpret and apply the laws and rules adopted by the other two branches. In each case, the law, regulation, or executive action at issue will be engendered through political debate and activity in the other branches. Yet the public expects the court to perform its role with impartiality, and without regard to the partisan source of the legislation. It is therefore "crucial that the judges not be beholden to a party responsible for enactment of the legislation, or to one that opposed it." 361 F.3d at 1044. The judicial role requires independence from the political branches, and from the political parties that dominate them.[4]

Minnesota's Constitution recognizes the need to protect the impartiality and independence of judges. It contains provisions protecting the structure and jurisdiction of the courts from legislative control, art. VI, §§ 2-4, 7, 11-3, allowing the judiciary to select its own employees, art. VI, § 2, and prohibiting judges from holding other governmental office, art. VI, § 6. "[T]he founders of [Minnesota's] system of government intended to confine the courts to their judicial

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[4] The Eighth Circuit assumed that judicial recusal could address bias in cases where a political party formally appeared. 416 F.3d at 755. But, apart from the difficulty of finding a nonpartisan judge in a world of partisan endorsements, the problem is much broader than those cases in which political parties are courtroom parties; it arises in every case in which political parties have a strong interest—a very wide spectrum of cases dealing with the most important issues to face a state court in a given year. Recusal is not a practical solution.

duties, and thus prevent them from becoming involved in the turmoil of political life." *State ex rel. Young v. Brill*, 111 N.W. 639, 650-51 (Minn. 1907).

Judicial elections are also a fundamental part of Minnesota's scheme to preserve the impartiality and independence of judges. *See* Wendy Weiser, *Regulating Judges' Political Activity After White*, 68 Alb. L. Rev. 651 (2005). As the petition (at 2) explains, nonpartisan judicial elections were viewed as a means of avoiding the partisanship involved in the distribution of judgeships through political appointments. Necessary to this reform, in the view of Minnesotans, was a restriction on partisan activity by the judges themselves.

This Court has previously recognized the strength of the State's interest in protecting judges from partisan entanglements. In *Clements v. Fashing*, 457 U.S. 957, 968 (1982), the Court upheld state rules requiring that judges resign from their judicial positions before running for another office. The Court recognized that a State could take into account the need to avoid the reality or appearance of partisanship on the bench:

> A campaigning [judge] might be tempted to render decisions and take actions that might serve more to further his political ambitions than the responsibilities of his office. The State's interests are especially important with regard to judicial officers. It is a serious accusation to charge a judicial officer with making a politically motivated decision. By contrast, it is to be expected that a legislator will vote with due regard to the views of his constituents.

Id. at 968. *Clements*, with its useful guidance, was not weighed by the Eighth Circuit. If a State can require a judge to resign his position entirely before pursuing a political office, it seems reasonable a State could adopt the much less

intrusive measure of forbidding certain forms of partisanship in connection with judicial elections.

In striking down the partisanship provisions, the Court of Appeals reasoned that they did not forbid all other forms of partisan activity by prospective judges, such as membership in interest groups or political activity before they ascend the bench. According to the majority, this rendered the regulation fatally underinclusive. However, this Court has repeatedly held that "'reform may take one step at a time, addressing itself to the phase of the problem which seems most acute to the legislative mind.'" *McConnell*, 540 U.S. at 207-08 (quoting *Buckley*, 424 U.S. at 105).

Given the unique place of political parties in American elections, it was entirely reasonable for Minnesota to limit its regulation to the specific problem posed by political parties. Political parties specialize in electing candidates, and have a powerful machinery dedicated to achieving that end. As a result, parties are in a much stronger position than other organizations to demand and hold the loyalty of an elected candidate. Indeed, this Court upheld that this distinction in *McConnell*: "Congress is fully entitled to consider the real-world differences between political parties and interest groups when crafting a system of campaign finance regulation. . . . Political parties have influence and power . . . that vastly exceeds that of any interest group." 540 U.S. at 188. Thus, the Eighth Circuit's underinclusiveness analysis also raises questions worthy of review.

B. The Decision Exacerbates Confusion About The Ability To Restrict Partisan Activity

The overwhelming majority of states (and the United States) currently ban partisan activity by judicial candidates,

sitting judges, or both.[5] The Eighth Circuit's decision creates deep uncertainty about the validity of these provisions and a need for clarification from this Court.

To be sure, the Eighth Circuit's decision is consistent with two district court decisions in this area. *See O'Neill v. Coughlan*, Case No. 1:04CV1612, slip op. at 9-10 (N.D. Ohio Sept. 14, 2004) (order granting TRO because "judicial candidates are entitled to state their party affiliation or membership in any medium or venue, at any time"); *Spargo v. N.Y. State Comm'n on Judicial Conduct*, 244 F. Supp. 2d 72, 80 (N.D.N.Y.) (partisan activity clause is impermissible prior restraint), *vacated*, 351 F.3d 65 (2d Cir. 2003), *cert. denied*, 541 U.S. 1085 (2004).

However, the Eighth Circuit's decision is inconsistent with a recent decision of the Federal Circuit. In *McEntee v. Merit Systems Protection Board*, 404 F.3d 1320 (Fed. Cir. 2005), a federal employee wished to run for mayor in an election that, like Minnesota's judicial elections, was nonpartisan. *Id.* at 1322. While this was permissible under the Hatch Act, the employee also engaged in partisan activity throughout his campaign, including seeking and using political party endorsements. *Id.* at 1324. The Board found that, by injecting partisanship into his campaign, the employee had violated the Hatch Act, and the Federal Circuit affirmed. *Id.* at 1324-25, 1335. The Federal Circuit upheld the government's ability to restrict partisan activity by candidates in nonpartisan elections—precisely the effect of

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[5] *See* Petition at 16. Most state restrictions on political activities are analogs to the ABA Model Code. *See* Model Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 5 (1990). Within the last month, the ABA has reiterated its belief that political activity restrictions are constitutional. *See* Joint Comm'n to Evaluate the Model Code of Judicial Conduct, Final Draft Report, Rule 5.01(A) & cmt. (Dec. 14, 2005).

the restriction struck down by the Eighth Circuit. In contrast to the Eighth Circuit, the Federal Circuit relied on *Letter Carriers* and explained that this Court's decision in *White* did not alter the analysis. *See id.* at 1332 n.7. These two circuit decisions are plainly at odds.

In any event, as with the solicitation clause, the lead role in assessing and applying such ethical constraints lies with the state courts of last resort. Their judges find themselves serving at once as drafters of the rules, interpreters of the rules, and candidates subject to the rules. The overwhelming majority of state courts that have considered limits on partisan activities have sustained them against constitutional challenge.

Some courts have sustained them in specific grievance proceedings. *See In re Raab*, 793 N.E.2d 1287 (N.Y. 2003) (upholding ban on participation in partisan political activity by judicial candidates and sitting judges); *In re Dunleavy*, 838 A.2d 338 (Me. 2003) (upholding provisions requiring resignation of judge before running for political office), *cert. denied*, 541 U.S. 960 (2004); *cf. Griffen v. Arkansas Judicial Discipline & Disability Comm'n*, 130 S.W.3d 524, 533, 535-36 (Ark. 2003) (upholding, in concept, code provisions banning political activities of judges, while deciding that a particular exception to the provisions caused them to be unconstitutionally vague).

Others have found restrictions on partisan activities to be constitutional in the context of promulgating those rules. For example, after *White*, the Wisconsin Supreme Court by a slim majority passed new court rules that impose *more stringent* limits on political activity of judicial candidates than under its previous rules. *See* Order, In re Amendment of Supreme Court Rules, No. 00-07, 2004 WI 134, 274 Wis. 2d xlvii (Wis. Oct. 29, 2004). The new rules essentially require that the existing rules limiting partisan activities of sitting judges will now equally apply to judicial candidates. *Id.*

Even those courts that believe partisan-activity restrictions must be lifted in light of *White* do not agree on *which* partisan-activity restrictions are affected. For example, South Dakota, after considering the Eighth Circuit's decision, adopted new rules allowing its judges and judicial candidates to "attend political gatherings," but still prohibiting a judge or judicial candidate from, among other things, "mak[ing] speeches on behalf of a political organization" and "publicly endors[ing] . . . another candidate for public office." *See* S.D. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 5A(1)(c) (amended Dec. 1, 2005). North Carolina, after *Weaver*, went further, now allowing a judge or judicial candidate to "attend, preside over, and speak at any political party gathering," as well as "endorse any individual seeking election to any office." *See* N.C. Code of Jud. Cond., Canon 7B(4) (amended Apr. 2, 2003). Although differing state rules sometimes reflect a healthy difference in policy choices, here they reflect a decidedly unhealthy confusion about whether, or to what extent, those rules can exist at all.

The confusion over ethical restraints on partisan activities is well illustrated by the situation in New York. There, the federal district court enjoined enforcement of restrictions on partisan activity with broad reasoning: "[A] rule prohibiting an elected judge or judicial candidate from participating in politics is not narrowly tailored to serve the state's interest in an independent judiciary." *Spargo*, 244 F. Supp. 2d at 89. A few months later, the highest court of New York upheld such restrictions. *In re Raab*, 793 N.E.2d at 1289-94. It analogized the case to this Court's *Letter Carriers* decision. The court also observed, "The State's interest is not limited solely to preventing actual corruption through contributor-candidate arrangements. Of equal import is the prevention of the appearance of corruption stemming from public awareness of the opportunities for abuse." *Id.* at 1291 (citations omitted). The federal decision has since been

vacated on *Younger* abstention grounds. 351 F.3d 65 (2d Cir. 2003), *cert. denied*, 541 U.S. 1085 (2004). Thus, the situation in New York, as elsewhere, remains uncertain.

CONCLUSION

Judges across the country are struggling to understand the disciplinary rules applicable to them:

> Today's judicial landscape is a complicated patchwork of restrictions on judges intermingled with First Amendment considerations. And judges are attempting to make sense of this patchwork. . . . [T]hey need guidance as to the interplay between First Amendment principles, judicial codes of conduct, and their own leadership roles. . . . [G]uidance at this time . . . is paramount.

Griffen, 266 F. Supp. 2d at 908. The questions at issue in this case are of immediate importance for many States and their ongoing judicial elections. The petition for a writ of certiorari should be granted.

Respectfully submitted,

CHARLES G. COLE
Counsel of Record
JOHN D. CLOPPER
JOHN P. NOLAN
STEPTOE & JOHNSON LLP
1330 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 429-6270

Attorneys for Former Chief Justices

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No. 05-566

IN THE

Supreme Court of the United States

MARTA HOLTON DIMICK, CHAIRPERSON, MINNESOTA BOARD ON JUDICIAL STANDARDS, *et al.*,
Petitioners,

v.

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, *et al.*,
Respondents.

On Petition for a Writ of Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit

BRIEF OF JUDICIAL ETHICS AND CONSTITUTIONAL LAW SCHOLARS AS *AMICI CURIAE* IN SUPPORT OF THE PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

MARK E. HADDAD
STEVEN A. ELLIS
SIDLEY AUSTIN LLP
555 West Fifth Street
Los Angeles, California 90013
(213) 896-6000

CARTER G. PHILLIPS*
SIDLEY AUSTIN LLP
1501 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 736-8000

Counsel for Amici Curiae

* Counsel of Record

January 4, 2006

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QUESTION PRESENTED

Whether and to what extent the State of Minnesota may, in order to protect the fact and appearance of judicial integrity, independence, and impartiality, restrict candidates in non-partisan judicial elections from (a) engaging in partisan political activity and (b) personally soliciting campaign contributions, without violating the free speech and free association rights of judicial candidates under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

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INTEREST OF *AMICI CURIAE*[1]

Judicial Ethics and Constitutional Law Scholars Leslie W. Abramson, James J. Alfini, Erwin Chemerinsky, Mary C. Daly, Stephen Gillers, Andrew L. Kaufman, Steven Lubet, Carrie J. Menkel-Meadow, Thomas D. Morgan, Robert M. O'Neil, Burnele Venable Powell, Ronald D. Rotunda, and

[1] This brief is filed with the consent of all parties. Pursuant to Rule 37.6, the *amici curiae* certify that no counsel for a party authored this brief in whole or in part and that no person or entity other than the *amici curiae* and their counsel made a monetary contribution to the preparation and submission of this brief.

Jeffrey M. Shaman submit this brief as *amici curiae* in support of the petition for writ of certiorari in this case.

The *amici curiae* are law professors who have studied and written extensively about judicial ethics, professional responsibility, and/or the First Amendment. The *amici curiae* have chaired, served on, or advised various committees of the American Bar Association (ABA), state and local bars, and/or state courts that regulate judicial ethics or professional responsibility, and have provided legal advice regarding the application of restrictions on the speech and conduct of candidates for elected judicial office. Specifically:

Leslie W. Abramson is a Professor of Law at the Louis D. Brandeis School of Law at the University of Louisville. He is the author of *Judicial Disqualification Under Canon 3 of the Code of Judicial Conduct* (2d ed. 1992).

James J. Alfini is the President and Dean of the South Texas College of Law. He is a member of the American Bar Association Joint Commission to Evaluate the Model Code of Judicial Conduct (which is currently proposing revisions to the ABA's Model Code regarding the speech and conduct of candidates for elected judicial office), but he is a signatory to this brief in his personal capacity and not as a representative of the ABA Joint Commission, which has not taken any position on this matter. He is the co-author (with *amici curiae* Jeffrey M. Shaman and Steven Lubet) of *Judicial Conduct and Ethics* (3d ed. 2000).

Erwin Chemerinsky is the Alston & Bird Professor of Law at the Duke University School of Law. He is the author of *Constitutional Law* (2d ed. 2005), *Federal Jurisdiction* (4th ed. 2003), and *Constitutional Law: Principles and Policies* (2d ed. 2002).

Mary C. Daly is the Dean of St. John's University School of Law and holds the John V. Brennan Chair of Law and Ethics. She has served as chair of the Committee on Professional and Judicial Ethics of the Association of the Bar

of the City of New York, Reporter to the New York State Bar Association Task Force on the Profession, Reporter for the ABA Commission on Multidisciplinary Practice, and Member of the ABA Standing Committee on Professional Discipline. She is the co-editor of *Rights, Liability and Ethics in International Legal Practice* (2d ed. forthcoming) and *The New York Code of Professional Responsibility: Opinions, Commentary, and Caselaw* (1997 and 2005 supp.).

Stephen Gillers is the Emily Kempin Professor of Law at the New York University School of Law. He is the author of *Regulation of Lawyers: Problems of Law and Ethics* (7th ed. 2005) and *If Elected, I Promise: What Should Judicial Candidates Be Allowed to Say?*, 35 Ind. L. Rev. 735 (2002).

Andrew L. Kaufman is the Vice-Dean for Academic Programming and the Charles Stebbins Fairchild Professor of Law at the Harvard Law School. He has served as a member of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court's Advisory Committee on Judicial Ethics and as a member of its Committee to revise the Massachusetts Code of Judicial Conduct. He is the co-author of *Problems in Professional Responsibility for a Changing Profession* (4th ed. 2002) and the author of *Judicial Correctness Meets Constitutional Correctness: Canon 2C of the Code of Judicial Conduct*, 32 Hofstra L. Rev. 1293 (2004).

Steven Lubet is the Director of the Program on Advocacy and Professionalism and a Professor of Law at the Northwestern University School of Law. He is the co-author (with *amici curiae* Jeffrey M. Shaman and James J. Alfini) of *Judicial Conduct and Ethics* (3d ed. 2000), the co-author of *Exercises and Problems in Professional Responsibility* (2d ed. 2001), and the author of *Beyond Reproach: Ethical Restrictions on the Extrajudicial Activities of State and Federal Judges* (1985) as well as more than sixty articles on judicial ethics and lawyers' ethics.

Carrie J. Menkel-Meadow is the A.B. Chettle, Jr. Professor of Dispute Resolution and Civil Procedure at the Georgetown University Law Center. She serves as co-editor of the Journal of Legal Education and the International Journal of Law in Context. She is the co-author of *What's Fair: Ethics for Negotiators* (2004) and *Lawyers and Legal Profession* (1987) and the author of *Ethics Issues in Arbitration and Related Dispute Resolution Processes: What's Happening and What's Not*, 56 U. Miami L. Rev. 949 (2002) and *Ethics, Morality and Professional Responsibility in Negotiation, in Dispute Resolution Ethics: A Comprehensive Guide* 119 (2002).

Thomas D. Morgan is the Oppenheim Professor of Antitrust and Trade Regulation Law at the George Washington University Law School. He was selected by the American Law Institute as one of three professors to prepare its *Restatement of the Law, The Law Governing Lawyers* (2000) and by the ABA as one of three professors to draft revisions to its Model Rules of Professional Conduct. He is the co-author (with *amicus curiae* Ronald D. Rotunda) of *Problems and Materials on Professional Responsibility* (8th ed. 2003) and *Selected Standards on Professional Responsibility, Including California and New York Rules* (published annually since 1978).

Robert M. O'Neil is a Professor of Law at the University of Virginia, and served as President of the University of Virginia from 1985-1990. He has served as the President of the Virginia Council for Open Government and chair of the Council for America's First Freedom and a commission on the future of Virginia's judicial system. He is the author of *The First Amendment and Civil Liability* (2001), *Free Speech in the College Community* (1997), and *The Canons in the Courts: Recent First Amendment Rulings*, 35 Ind. L. Rev. 701 (2002).

Burnele Venable Powell is the Miles and Ann Loadholt Professor of Law at the University of South Carolina School of Law, where he served as Dean from 2004-2005. He has

served as Chair of the ABA Standing Committee on Professional Discipline and the ABA Joint Subcommittee on Implementation of Lawyer Disciplinary Enforcement, and as a Member of the ABA Commission on the Evaluation of the Rules for Professional Conduct, the ABA Standing Committee on Professionalism, the ABA Commission on Multidisciplinary Practice, and the ABA Commission on Public Financing of Judicial Campaigns. He is the co-author of *Lawyers and the Legal Profession: Cases and Materials* (4th ed. forthcoming).

Ronald D. Rotunda is a George Mason University Foundation Professor of Law at the George Mason University School of Law. He has served as Chair of the subcommittee that drafted the ABA Model Rules for Lawyer Disciplinary Enforcement and as a Member of the Publications Board of the ABA Center for Professional Responsibility and the ABA Standing Committee on Professional Discipline. He is the co-author (with *amicus curiae* Thomas D. Morgan) of *Problems and Materials on Professional Responsibility* (8th ed. 2003) and *Selected Standards on Professional Responsibility, Including California and New York Rules* (published annually since 1978), the co-author of *Legal Ethics: The Lawyer's Deskbook on Professional Responsibility* (3d ed. 2005), the author of *Modern Constitutional Law* (7th ed. 2003), and the co-author of the five-volume *Treatise on Constitutional Law* (3d ed. 1999).

Jeffrey M. Shaman is the St. Vincent de Paul Professor of Law at the DePaul University College of Law. He is the co-author (with *amici curiae* Steven Lubet and James J. Alfini) of *Judicial Conduct and Ethics* (3d ed. 2000).

The *amici curiae* support and urge the Court to grant the petition for a writ of certiorari. In their positions as legal scholars, committee members, and advisors on issues relating to judicial ethics and the First Amendment, the *amici curiae* are particularly aware of, affected by, and concerned by the confusion and inconsistency that has become pervasive

among lower courts, State regulatory authorities, and judicial candidates concerning the nature and scope of the restrictions that States may choose, consistent with the Federal Constitution, to impose upon the speech and conduct of candidates for state and local elected judicial offices. Notwithstanding this Court's decision in *Republican Party of Minnesota* v. *White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002), the confusion has continued to spread as the state courts and lower federal courts issue decisions, including the one in this case, that are fundamentally inconsistent and cannot be reconciled. As a result, there is a patchwork of federal and state court rulings in the place where there should be a uniform rule on a fundamental issue of federal constitutional law that is of profound national importance.

In the absence of further guidance from this Court, lower courts will continue to decide issues in a manner that either (a) interferes with the rights of the States to regulate the judicial selection process and to protect the integrity, impartiality, and independence of state court judicial systems or (b) infringes the First Amendment rights of candidates for elected office to communicate their views to voters, unimpeded by government regulation.

In supporting the petition for a writ of certiorari, the *amici curiae* do not take any position on the merits of the dispute.

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE PETITION

This case arises at the intersection of two fundamental and hallowed principles in our system of government under the Federal Constitution.

The first principle involved in this matter is State sovereignty. Each State has the sovereign right to make its own decisions regarding how to structure its state judicial system, including the manner in which judges will be selected, subject to the limitations of the Fourteenth Amendment. *Gregory* v. *Ashcroft*, 501 U.S. 452, 460 (1991)

("Through the structure of its government, and the character of those who exercise government[al] authority, a State defines itself as a sovereign."). In making these decisions, the States have consistently recognized the critical importance of protecting both the fact and the appearance of the integrity, impartiality, and independence of their judicial officers, and thereby maintaining public confidence in state judicial systems. "The legitimacy of the Judicial Branch ultimately depends on its reputation for impartiality and nonpartisanship." *Mistretta* v. *United States*, 488 U.S. 361, 407 (1989); see also *Chisom* v. *Roemer*, 501 U.S. 380, 401 n.29 (1991) ("it is the business of judges to be indifferent to popularity"); *In re Murchison*, 349 U.S. 133, 136 (1955) ("to perform its high function in the best way 'justice must satisfy the appearance of justice'") (quoting *Offutt* v. *United States*, 348 U.S. 11, 14 (1954)). When a State has chosen the method it believes is best designed to protect judicial integrity, impartiality, and independence, federal courts should be hesitant to set that choice aside.

The second principle involved in this matter is the First Amendment right of free speech (as incorporated through the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment), and specifically the right of candidates for elected office to communicate their views on issues of public interest to voters. See *Brown v. Hartlage*, 456 U.S. 45, 60 (1982); *Williams* v. *Rhodes*, 393 U.S. 23, 32 (1968); *Wood* v. *Georgia*, 370 U.S. 375, 395 (1962). This right is of paramount importance under the First Amendment. *Eu* v. *San Francisco County Democratic Cent. Comm.*, 489 U.S. 214, 222-23 (1989) (stating that "'debate on the qualifications of candidates'" is "'at the core of our electoral process and of the First Amendment freedoms'"); *Buckley* v. *Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1, 15 (1976) (First Amendment "has its fullest and most urgent application precisely to the conduct of campaigns for political office"). When a government entity oversteps permissible bounds in regulating the speech of a candidate for elected office, courts

must be prepared to intervene and vindicate the First Amendment free speech rights of the candidate.

These two fundamental principles potentially collide in cases, like this one, in which a State's regulation of the speech or conduct of judicial candidates designed to protect the integrity of the judiciary is challenged on First Amendment grounds. Because of the importance of these two principles, the calibration required to decide these cases must be both fine and definitive. An error in either direction will inevitably cause significant harm to an important public interest, whether it is to State sovereignty (and the efforts by States to protect the integrity, impartiality, and independence of their judicial officers) or to free speech.

Four years ago, in *Republican Party of Minnesota* v. *White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002), this Court addressed a Minnesota regulation of state judicial candidates under a provision known as the "announce" clause, which prohibited a candidate from "'announc[ing] his or her views on disputed legal or political issues.'" *Id.* at 768. The Court applied strict scrutiny to the regulation and held that it was not narrowly tailored to serve a compelling state interest. *Id.* at 774-82.

The Court made it clear in *White* that its holding was a narrow one. For example, twice the Court stated that the petitioner did not challenge, and so the Court was not addressing, Minnesota's narrower "pledges or promises" clause, which prohibits a candidate from making "'pledges or promises of conduct in office other than the faithful and impartial performance of the duties of the office.'" *Id.* at 770, 780.[2] Nor did the Court address the "commit" clause contained in Canon 5 of the ABA Model Code of Judicial Conduct and in

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[2] According to the dissenting justices, the petitioner conceded that the "pledges or promises" clause is constitutionally valid. *White*, 536 U.S. at 813 (Ginsburg, J., dissenting) ("All parties to this case agree that, whatever the validity of the Announce Clause, the State may constitutionally prohibit judicial candidates from pledging or promising certain results.").

many state regulations, which prohibits a candidate from making "'statements that commit or appear to commit the candidate with respect to cases, controversies or issues that are likely to come before the court.'" *Id.* at 773 n.5. And, in response to the dissenting opinion of Justice Ginsburg, the Court emphasized that the holding of *White* was narrow and that the Court's opinion did not "assert" or "imply that the First Amendment requires campaigns for judicial office to sound the same as those for legislative office." *Id.* at 783.

Notwithstanding the Court's statements about the narrow scope of the holding in *White*, the lower courts have struggled to apply *White* to other types of State regulation of judicial candidates. In general terms, two separate and distinct lines of authority have arisen post-*White*.

First, some judges and State regulators have interpreted *White* narrowly, often citing the Court's statements in *White* about the limited scope of its holding. As a result, State regulation of the speech and conduct of judicial candidates (other than the "announce" clause) has been upheld.

For example, in *In re Kinsey*, 842 So. 2d 77 (Fla.) (per curiam), *cert. deniea*, 540 U.S. 825 (2003), the Florida Supreme Court disciplined an elected County Court Judge based upon statements that she made as a candidate. During her campaign, the judge stated that she would "'help law enforcement by putting criminals ... behind bars,'" would take the testimony of police officers "'seriously,'" would "'support our valiant law enforcement officers,'" and would "'bend over backward'" to assist crime victims. *Id.* at 80-82, 87-88. The court found that these statements and others made by the judge during the campaign violated both the "pledges or promise" clause and the "commit" clause of the Florida Code of Judicial Conduct and rejected the judge's First Amendment challenge to the Code. The court stated that the Code does not include the "announce" clause invalidated in *White* and that it both "serves a compelling state interest in preserving the integrity of our judiciary and maintaining the

public's confidence in an impartial judiciary" and is narrowly tailored to serve that interest. *Id.* at 87. The court explained, "[I]t would be inconsistent with our system of government if a judicial candidate could campaign on a platform that he or she would automatically give more credence to the testimony of certain witnesses or rule in a predetermined manner in a case which was heading to court." *Id.*

Other authorities in this line include two decisions of the New York Court of Appeals decided on the same day, *In re Watson*, 794 N.E.2d 1 (N.Y. 2003) (per curiam) (imposing discipline for violating restriction on political activity) and *In re Raab*, 793 N.E.2d 1287 (N.Y. 2003) (per curiam) (imposing discipline for violating "pledges or promises" clause by making statements that indicated a bias against criminal defendants). In both cases the court held that the regulations on judicial candidates satisfied strict scrutiny, and in both cases the court emphasized the limited scope of *White*. As the New York court explained:

> The Court [in *White*] did not declare ... that judicial candidates must be treated the same as nonjudicial candidates or that their political activity or speech may not be legitimately circumscribed. To the contrary, the Court distinguished Minnesota's announce clause from other rules restricting the speech of judicial candidates, taking no position on the validity of other judicial conduct provisions.

Id. at 1290. *Accord Watson*, 794 N.E.2d at 6 ("New York's Rules Governing Judicial Conduct do not include a provision analogous to Minnesota's 'announce clause.' The pledges or promises clause in this case is significantly different from the announce clause in that it does not prohibit judicial candidates from articulating their views on legal issues. Indeed, *White* itself distinguished the announcements at issue in that case

from 'pledges or promises,' which are covered by another Minnesota rule." (citation omitted)).[3]

In contrast, in a separate line of authority, lower federal courts have generally interpreted *White* broadly to prohibit all challenged restrictions on the speech and conduct of judicial candidates. For example, in *Weaver* v. *Bonner*, 309 F.3d 1312 (11th Cir. 2002), the court held that Georgia's rules against personally soliciting either campaign contributions or public support and against making false or misleading campaign statements were inconsistent with the First Amendment. The court rejected the State's argument that it was entitled to impose greater restrictions on candidates for judicial office than it could for other categories of candidates, concluding that such an argument was foreclosed by *White*. *Id.* at 1320-21. As the court explained, "[T]he Supreme Court's decision in *White* suggests that the standard for judicial elections should be the same as the standard for legislative and executive elections." *Id.* at 1321.

Similarly, in *North Dakota Family Alliance* v. *Bader*, 361 F. Supp. 2d 1021 (D.N.D. 2005), a district court held that *White* required the invalidation of North Dakota's "pledges

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[3] *See also, e.g.*, JE-105 Op. Ethics Comm. of the Ky. Judiciary (Apr. 30, 2004), *available at* http://www.kycourts.net/AOC/SLL/JESearch/JE-105.pdf (stating that judicial candidates may not identify themselves as members of a political party); State of Ga., *Code of Judicial Conduct*, Canon 7(B)(1)(b) (issued Jan. 7, 2004) (prohibiting judicial candidates from making "statements that commit the candidate with respect to issues likely to come before the court"); 1-02 Op. Ind. Comm'n on Judicial Qualifications, *available at* http://www.in.gov/judiciary/judqual/opinions.html (last modified Dec. 29, 2005) (stating the "commit" clause and "pledge or promise" restrictions are still valid and enforceable after *White*); 2002-8 Op. Ohio Bd. of Comm'rs on Grievances & Discipline (Aug. 9, 2002), *available at* http://www.sconet.state.oh.us/BOC/Advisory_Opinions/2002//op_02-008.doc (same); *In re Enforcement of Rule 2.03, Canon 5.B(1)(c)* (Mo. July 18, 2002) (en banc order) (same for "pledges or promises" clause restriction).

and promises" clause and its "commitment" clause. That court observed:

> A careful reading of the majority opinion in *White* makes it clear that the "pledges and promises clause" and the "commitment clause" are not long for this world. The justifications offered in support of the "announce clause" in Minnesota – the preservation of an impartial judiciary and the appearance of an impartial judiciary – are the same justifications advanced by North Dakota in support of the "commitment clause" and the "pledges and promises clause." In *White*, those justifications were found to be lacking and insufficient under a strict scrutiny analysis.

Id. at 1039; see also *id.* at 1041 ("This Court is of the opinion that there is little, if any, distinction between the 'announce clause' which was struck down by the United States Supreme Court in *White*, and the 'commitment clause' and the 'pledges and promises clause' contained in ... the North Dakota Code of Judicial Conduct.").

The competing lines of lower court authority interpreting the *White* decision cannot be reconciled. As the district court stated in *Bader*,

> To say that there is considerable uncertainty regarding the scope of the Supreme Court's decision in *White* is an understatement.... It has caused, and will continue to cause, considerable uncertainty and consternation on the part of judicial candidates.

Id. at 1041-42; see also *id.* at 1035 ("Suffice it to say that the *White* decision has raised far more questions than it answered, particularly for those entities charged with establishing ethical standards for the judiciary.").

The opinions below in this matter, which address challenges to Minnesota's restrictions on partisan activity and direct solicitation of campaign contributions, illustrate the

irreconcilable nature of these two lines of authority. In the Eighth Circuit's panel opinion, for example, the majority adopted the narrow interpretation of *White*. The panel quoted the language from the Court's opinion, noted above, that the Court did not "'assert [or] imply that the First Amendment requires campaigns for judicial office to sound the same as those for legislative office.'" *Republican Party of Minn.* v. *White*, 361 F.3d 1035, 1049 (8th Cir. 2004) (quoting *White*, 536 U.S. at 783), *vacated en banc*, Nos. 99-4021 et al. (8th Cir. May 25, 2004). The panel majority also noted with skepticism the Eleventh Circuit's statement in *Weaver* that, post-*White*, there could not be "'greater restrictions on speech during judicial campaigns than during other types of campaigns.'" *Id.* (quoting *Weaver*, 309 F.3d at 1321).

On rehearing *en banc*, however, the Eighth Circuit adopted the opposite interpretation of *White*. Reading *White* broadly, the court concluded that Minnesota's restrictions on partisan activity and direct solicitation were not narrowly tailored to serve any compelling interest identified by the State; thus, the restrictions were inconsistent with the First Amendment. *Republican Party of Minn.* v. *White*, 416 F.3d 738, 749-66 (8th Cir. 2005) (en banc).

Accordingly, the proceedings below demonstrate plainly the profound uncertainty regarding the proper application of *White* in contexts other than the "announce" clause. Moreover, the regulations at issue here – restrictions on the direct solicitation of campaign contributions and on partisan activity – have been adopted in similar form in many other States and are central to the States' interests in protecting the judiciary's integrity. This is a critical area of uncertainty among lower courts post-*White*, and this case provides an excellent vehicle for the Court to provide needed guidance to courts and regulators who are struggling to balance properly

the interests impacted by efforts to regulate the speech and conduct of candidates in judicial elections in the future.[4]

The opportunity to provide further guidance in this area regarding issues not directly resolved by *White* is particularly important and urgent because the confusion and uncertainty reflected by the split in authority described above affects not only courts but also the decisions being made on a daily basis by candidates campaigning for judicial office and by the State regulators who enforce the judicial conduct codes. The current state of the law is unclear, and thus the rules are followed, applied, and enforced inconsistently. As a result, with each election cycle that passes without additional guidance from this Court, the public interest in fair, ethical, and open elections for judicial offices inevitably suffers irreparable harm.[5]

Finally, it is inescapable that one of the lines of authority described above is incorrect. With every election cycle that passes under the current state of the law, either (a) the First Amendment right of judicial candidates to engage in campaign activity is being improperly restricted in some

---

[4] *See* 21 Laws. Man. on Prof. Conduct (ABA/BNA) 658 (Dec. 28, 2005) ("If the [C]ourt grants review [in this matter], it will have the opportunity to clarify what, if any, restrictions on a judge's speech and campaigning are permitted under the First Amendment. This may prove crucial to the ... work [of the ABA Joint Commission to Evaluate the Model Code of Judicial Conduct], as the commission is crafting rules on political speech and conduct amid a body of constitutional jurisprudence that may still be evolving.").

[5] The confusion and uncertainty is particularly apparent in a State such as Florida, in which, as explained above, the Eleventh Circuit has stated in broad terms that the State may not regulate judicial elections to a greater degree than it regulates other elections, but the State Supreme Court continues to enforce rules that impose unique restrictions on candidates for judicial office. As a result, it is almost impossible in Florida for judicial candidates or State enforcement authorities to know whether the existing State restrictions on the campaign activities of candidates for judicial office are valid and consistent with the First Amendment.

States or (b) an overly broad interpretation of the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment is improperly infringing upon other States' sovereign rights to enforce restrictions that those States deem necessary to ensure the integrity of their judicial systems.

While the *amici curiae* at this point are not prepared to opine as to how the relevant balance should be struck, they are convinced that important and fundamental constitutional rights are at stake. Only prompt review by this Court now can resolve the established conflict in lower court decisions, provide greater guidance and certainty to both judicial candidates and State regulators, and end the ongoing violation of either the First Amendment or State sovereignty.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, the petition for a writ of certiorari should be granted.

Respectfully submitted,

MARK E. HADDAD
STEVEN A. ELLIS
SIDLEY AUSTIN LLP
555 West Fifth Street
Los Angeles, California 90013
(213) 896-6000

CARTER G. PHILLIPS*
SIDLEY AUSTIN LLP
1501 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 736-8000

Counsel for Amici Curiae

January 4, 2006

* Counsel of Record

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No. 05-566

In The
Supreme Court of the United States

MARTHA HOLTON DIMICK, CHAIRPERSON, MINNESOTA BOARD ON JUDICIAL STANDARDS, *ET AL.*,

Petitioners,

v.

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, *ET AL.*,

Respondents.

On Petition For A Writ Of Certiorari To The United States Court Of Appeals For The Eighth Circuit

MOTION OF THE MISSOURI BAR FOR LEAVE TO FILE BRIEF *AMICUS CURIAE* AND BRIEF *AMICUS CURIAE* OF THE MISSOURI BAR IN SUPPORT OF THE PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

JOSEPH C. BLANTON, JR.
Counsel of Record
SHAUN D. HANSCHEN
BLANTON, RICE, SIDWELL, NICKELL, COZEAN & COLLINS, L.L.C.
219 S. Kingshighway, P.O. Box 805
Sikeston, MO 63801
Tel: (573) 471-1000
Fax: (573) 471-1012
jblanton@blantonlaw.com

COCKLE LAW BRIEF PRINTING CO. (800) 225-6964
OR CALL COLLECT (402) 342-2831

MOTION OF THE MISSOURI BAR FOR LEAVE TO FILE BRIEF *AMICUS CURIAE* AND ITS BRIEF *AMICUS CURIAE* IN SUPPORT OF THE PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

The Missouri Bar moves for leave to file a brief *amicus curiae* in support of Petitioners, as provided in Rule 37. The Petitioners consent to this request. The Respondents do not consent.

The Missouri Bar is a unified bar association consisting of twenty-eight thousand (28,000) attorneys licensed to practice in the State of Missouri. Mo.R.Civ.P. 7.01. The Missouri Bar has a strong interest in the validity of the Minnesota Judicial Campaign Contribution Solicitation Clause ("Solicitation Clause") in Minn. Code. of Jud. Con. Canon 5(B)(2). Missouri has an analogous rule. *See* Mo.R.Civ.P. 2.03, Canon 5(B)(2). The Minnesota clause and the analogous Missouri clause describe how a candidate for judicial office may solicit campaign funds. Both provisions prohibit judicial candidates from personally soliciting campaign funds. Minn. Code. of Jud. Con. Canon 5(B)(2); *see* Mo.R.Civ.P. 2.03, Canon 5(B)(2). Both states limit the solicitation of campaign contributions to judicial campaign committees. *Id.*

The Eighth Circuit, in *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 416 F.3d 738 (8th Cir. 2005), held the Minnesota Solicitation Clause – as well as the Partisan Activities Clause contained in the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct Canon 5(B)(2) – unconstitutional, finding both to be fatally underinclusive. The Eighth Circuit's decision calls into question the constitutionality of the analogous Missouri Solicitation Clause. Any decision by this Court may affect the processes for selecting judges in Missouri. While the Petitioners will present two (2) issues to the

Court, the validity of the Minnesota Partisan Activities Clause and the Minnesota Solicitation Clause, The Missouri Bar is only concerned with the Solicitation Clause.

Since the middle of the last century, Missouri has selected all appellate judges and trial court judges in urban areas through the Missouri Nonpartisan Court Plan, a merit system known nationally as "The Missouri Plan." Mo. Const. Art 5 Sec. 25(a-g). A selection panel screens candidates for these positions and submits three (3) nominees to the Governor of Missouri, who then makes a selection. *Id.* The appointee then serves until the next general election, when he or she must stand for a retention election. *Id.* at Sec. 25(c)(1). In rural parts of the state, trial judges are elected in contested, partisan elections. Mo. Rev. Stat. § 478.010.1 (2000); Mo. Const. Art. 5, Sec. 27. All judicial candidates in Missouri, including those running in partisan elections and those standing for retention under the Nonpartisan Court Plan, are bound by Missouri's Solicitation Clause, which prohibits the personal solicitation of campaign contributions. Mo.R.Civ.P. 2.03, Canon 5(B)(2).

The Petitioners will necessarily have to divide their focus between the Partisan Activities Clause and the Solicitation Clause. The Missouri Bar will focus on the validity of the Solicitation Clause and the wide-ranging impact the Eighth Circuit's decision will have on judicial elections in Missouri and other states with similar clauses. The Missouri Bar contends that prohibiting direct solicitation of campaign contributions by judges is a narrowly tailored restriction addressing a compelling state interest, warranting this Court to grant the petition for certiorari and, ultimately, to overturn the Eighth Circuit's decision.

The Missouri Bar can contribute to the Court's understanding of the effect of the invalidation of the Minnesota Solicitation Clause from the perspective of a state that has both contested judicial elections and retention elections. The Missouri Bar submits its brief in support of Petitioners' Petition for Writ of Certiorari with this Motion.

Respectfully submitted,

BLANTON, RICE, SIDWELL, NICKELL, COZEAN & COLLINS, L.L.C.
219 South Kingshighway
Post Office Box 805
Sikeston, Missouri 63801
Phone 573-471-1000 Fax 573-471-1012
jblanton@blantonlaw.com

JOSEPH C. BLANTON, JR.
Counsel of Record
SHAUN D. HANSCHEN

Attorneys for Amicus Curiae
The Missouri Bar

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INTEREST OF *AMICUS CURIAE*[1]

The Missouri Bar is a unified bar association comprised of twenty-eight thousand (28,000) attorneys licensed to practice in the State of Missouri. Mo.R.Civ.P. 7.01. The Missouri Bar has a strong interest in this case as a result of the Eighth Circuit's decision in *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 416 F.3d 738 (8th Cir. 2005), which invalidated the Solicitation Clause in Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct Canon 5(B)(2).[2] Missouri has an analogous rule, Mo.R.Civ.P. 2.03, Canon 5(B)(2), which may be subject to challenge as a result of the Eighth Circuit's decision. This Canon governs campaign fundraising for the

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[1] The Petitioners have consented to the filing of this brief.

Counsel for a party did not author this brief in whole or in part. No person or entity, other than the *Amicus Curiae*, its members, or its counsel made a monetary contribution to the preparation and submission of this brief.

[2] Minnesota Canon 5(B)(2) provides, in pertinent part:

> *A candidate shall not personally solicit or accept campaign contributions* or solicit publicly stated support. A candidate may, however, establish committees to conduct campaigns for the candidate through media advertisements, brochures, mailings, candidate forums and other means not prohibited by law. Such committees may solicit and accept campaign contributions, manage the expenditure of funds for the candidate's campaign and obtain public statements of support for his or her candidacy. Such committees are not prohibited from soliciting and accepting campaign contributions and public support from lawyers, but shall not seek, accept or use political organization endorsements. Such committees shall not disclose to the candidate the identity of campaign contributors nor shall the committee disclose to the candidate the identity of those who were solicited for contribution or stated public support and refused such solicitation. A candidate shall not use or permit the use of campaign contributions for the private benefit of the candidate or others. [emphasis added].

elections of judges at all levels of the Missouri courts. The Missouri Bar urges this Court to grant Petitioners' Petition for Writ of Certiorari, to overturn the decision of the Eighth Circuit and to find that the Minnesota Solicitation Clause is constitutional. This result would help protect the Missouri systems of electing and retaining judges.

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

The Eighth Circuit, in *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 416 F.3d 738 (8th Cir. 2005), found that the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct Canon 5(B)(2), the Solicitation Clause, was not narrowly tailored to address a compelling state interest. The Eighth Circuit based its decision on an incorrect and overly expansive reading of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision regarding the Minnesota Announce Clause in *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002). The Minnesota Solicitation Clause is, in fact, narrowly tailored to further the compelling interest of maintaining the appearance of judicial impartiality. The U.S. Supreme Court should grant Minnesota's Petition, reverse the decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, and affirm the validity of the Minnesota Solicitation Clause.

ARGUMENT

The Eighth Circuit determined that both the Minnesota Partisan Activities Clause and the Solicitation Clause violated the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. The Missouri Bar has an interest in the validity of the Minnesota Solicitation Clause and will

limit its argument to that issue. In invalidating the Minnesota Solicitation Clause, the Eighth Circuit applied strict scrutiny based upon a belief that the restriction was based on the subject matter and political nature of the speech. *White*, 416 F.3d at 763-64. The Eighth Circuit then considered whether the portions of the Solicitation Clause attacked by Respondents promote an interest in judicial impartiality, based both on lack of bias toward a party to a case and "open-mindedness." *Id.* at 765-66. The Court found that Minnesota had not narrowly tailored the challenged portions of the Solicitation Clause to promote these interests. *Id.* Consequently, the Eighth Circuit held that the challenged portions of the Solicitation Clause violated the First Amendment. *Id.*

In reaching this decision, the Eighth Circuit placed great emphasis on the campaign committee system contained in the Solicitation Clause, an aspect of the Minnesota rule that was not challenged by the Respondents. *Id.* at 765. It stated that the Respondents "challenge only the fact that they cannot solicit contributions from large groups and cannot, through their campaign committees, transmit solicitation messages above their personal signatures." *Id.* at 764-65. The court conceded that prohibiting judges and candidates for judicial office "from directly soliciting money from individuals who may come before them certainly addresses a compelling state interest in impartiality as to parties to a particular case." *Id.* at 765. However, the court then found that if the challenged portions of the Solicitation Clause were struck down, there was no danger of a judge or judicial candidate having an improper interest in a litigant's case because that judge or candidate would not know who contributed or was asked to contribute to his or her campaign. *Id.* Under the Minnesota rule,

all contributions must be made to a campaign committee and that committee cannot disclose to the candidate who makes contributions and who does not. *Id.* The Eighth Circuit found that, because of the campaign committee's role, the challenged portions of the Solicitation Clause were not narrowly tailored to promote the interest of an unbiased judiciary. *Id.* The Court further stated that a candidate's signature on a letter, either handwritten or mechanical, does not "magically endow [the candidate] with a power to divine, first, to whom that letter was sent, and second, whether that person contributed to the campaign or balked at the request." *Id.* It also stated that it is unlikely that the candidate will know who has either accepted or declined his solicitation of funds. *Id.* Therefore, the Court found that the challenged portions of the Solicitation Clause did not pass muster. *Id.* at 765-66.

Next, the Court considered whether the challenged portions of the Solicitation Clause were narrowly tailored to serving an interest in "open-mindedness." *Id.* at 766. It found that signing letters or asking a large group of voters for contributions would not damage the judge's "'willing[ness] to consider views that oppose his preconceptions, and remain open to persuasion, when the issues arise in a pending case.'" *Id.* Noting the presence of the campaign committees and the shield they provide to the identities of contributors or those solicited, the Court found that it challenged credulity to believe that the candidate would not remain open-minded. *Id.* Accordingly, it found that the Solicitation Clause was not narrowly tailored to a compelling state interest, and, therefore, did not pass muster under strict scrutiny. *Id.*

A. Compelling State Interest.

As noted by Petitioners, the Eighth Circuit completely failed to address the appearance of partiality created by the personal solicitation of campaign contributions and, instead, focused only on actual corruption. *See* Petition for a Writ of Certiorari, pages 25-26. Contrary to the Eighth Circuit's determination, Minnesota's Solicitation Clause is narrowly tailored to address a compelling state interest. The Missouri Bar contends that not only must there be actual impartiality, there must be the appearance of impartiality. The public will only respect the decisions of the judiciary if there is no question as to the courts' integrity.

> Courts, in our system, elaborate principles of law in the course of resolving disputes. The power and the prerogative of a court to perform this function rest, in the end, upon the respect accorded to its judgments. The citizen's respect for judgments depends in turn upon the issuing court's absolute probity. Judicial integrity is, in consequence, a state interest of the highest order.

Republican Party of Minnesota v. White, 536 U.S. 765, 793 (2002) (Kennedy, J., concurring). Even the Eleventh Circuit in *Weaver v. Bonner*, 309 F.3d 1312 (11th Cir. 2002), conceded that judicial impartiality is a compelling state interest. *Id.* at 1322.

The appearance of impartiality is a necessary corollary to judicial integrity. Any appearance of impropriety detracts from the public's confidence in judicial decision making. When a judge or judicial candidate personally solicits campaign funds, whether from the bench or via mass appeal, it gives the appearance to the public that justice is for sale. The public will necessarily believe that anyone willing to make a substantial donation to a

judicial candidate must expect some sort of return on that "investment." This appearance of a quid pro quo is even more troubling in the context of judicial elections than others because of the nature of the judiciary. Judges make decisions affecting anywhere from one person to millions. The public expects these decisions to be based on the law. If judges personally solicit contributions for their continued livelihood, some citizens will question those judges' impartiality. This concern would only be heightened in high-profile cases and would lead to invariable media speculation and research into a judge's donor list. This fundraising regime would drastically affect the appearance of judicial integrity and, hence, would lead to a loss of public confidence in judicial decision-making.

Allowing the personal solicitation by judges and judicial candidates of campaign funds would place lawyers in especially untenable situations. Such a judicial fundraising apparatus would facilitate arguments by cynics that the lawyers and litigants with the most money might receive different justice than those of more modest circumstances. Allowing judges to solicit campaign funds directly, as opposed to through committees, would also undoubtedly favor incumbents.

B. Narrowly Tailored.

The Eighth Circuit determined that the challenged portions of the Solicitation Clause were not narrowly tailored to address the issues of lack of bias for or against a party to a case and open-mindedness. *White*, 416 F.3d at 765-67. In doing so, it focused primarily on the fact that the campaign committees shielded the judge or judicial candidate from knowing the identities of individual donors, even if the candidate personally solicited a large group of

people or signed letters. *Id.* It is possible, though far from certain, that the campaign committee shield would serve the purpose of preventing the judge or candidate from being personally biased or not open-minded. However, the campaign committee's role does not address the problem of public perception. Crucially, without the limitations imposed by the Solicitation Clause, the candidate could still personally solicit contributions from large groups or by signing letters. This is the backdrop against which the candidate or judge will be viewed by the public at large.

The challenged portions of the Solicitation Clause are finely-tuned to address this specific concern. The Solicitation Clause prevents the appearance of corruption by preventing judges and judicial candidates from engaging in the precise activities most likely to give rise to a public perception of corruption. There is a qualitative difference in appearance between solicitations by candidates and those by committees. Minnesota still allows committees established to support judicial candidacies to raise virtually unlimited funds. The very narrow prohibition of which Appellants complain is directed toward the precise problem identified by the State of Minnesota. Of note, Minnesota also adds the additional protection of precluding campaign committees from informing the candidates of the results of the committee's fund-raising efforts.

In addition, by granting this Petition for Certiorari, this Court has the opportunity to limit the overly expansive reading given to *White I* by the Eighth Circuit and the Eleventh Circuit in *Weaver*. In *Weaver*, 309 F.3d at 1323, the Eleventh Circuit found that Georgia's Solicitation Clause was not narrowly tailored to address Georgia's compelling state interest. It found that because Georgia has judicial elections, it must live with all of the accoutrements of elections, including all aspects of the fundraising.

Id. at 1322. The Eleventh Circuit in *Weaver* expressed a remarkable view of the nature of judicial elections:

> We agree that the distinction between judicial elections and other types of elections has been greatly exaggerated, and we do not believe that the distinction, if there truly is one, justifies greater restrictions on speech during judicial campaigns and during other types of campaigns.

Id. at 1321.

This premise, upon which the Eleventh Circuit's ultimate conclusion in *Weaver* rests, is simply wrong. Unlike elected representatives, judges should not be expected to carry out agendas. Rather, they should consider the cases before them and apply the law to the facts without any unfair biases or evidence of – to use Justice Scalia's term – partiality. The remarkable conflation by the Eleventh Circuit in *Weaver* of judicial elections and elections in general marks an unwarranted expansion of *White I*. Justice Scalia only said that the differences might be exaggerated, a sentiment nowhere seconded in any of the concurring opinions. He nowhere stated that there were no differences.

> [T]he Court in *Weaver v. Bonner* completely recharacterized the [*White*] decision . . . [A] thoughtful reading of *Weaver* suggests that the concept of an impartial and independent judiciary cannot exist if judges remain elected officials. *Weaver* clearly demonstrates the dangers of a liberal reading of the *White* decision, and provides further support for the need to alter state judicial election procedures in the decision's wake.

Chandonnet, B., *The Increasing Politicization of the American Judiciary*, 12 Wm. & Mary Bill Rts. J. 577, 599

(2004); *see also Judicial Campaign Speech Restrictions in Light of Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 24 N.Ill.U.L.Rev. 295, 345-46 (2004).

Missouri lawyers are not so pessimistic about judicial elections. There is no reason to travel the road implicitly suggested by the Eleventh Circuit in *Weaver*, i.e., doing away with all judicial elections. The members of The Missouri Bar practice in a state wherein candidates for elected judgeships and those standing for retention in elections have not personally solicited campaigns funds. Members of The Missouri Bar have not observed any serious problems arising from the fact that the members of The Missouri Bar and the state's citizens in general have not received an avalanche of fund-raising letters from judicial candidates who either are or want to be judges. There has also been no suggestion that any sitting judges or persons aspiring to serve as judges have in any way been deprived of a full and fair opportunity to present their cases to voters by the fact that they themselves have been unable to personally solicit funds.

An appropriate analysis of state restrictions on judicial campaign fund-raising can be found in *In re Dunleavy*, 2003 ME 124, 838 A.2d 338 (2003). There, the Maine Supreme Court held that a provision of its judicial code of conduct prohibiting judges from soliciting campaign contributions both furthered a compelling state interest and satisfied strict scrutiny.[3] 838 A.2d at 350-51.

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[3] The Maine Supreme Court also noted that it was possible that strict scrutiny did not even apply to such a restriction, noting that "a restriction on expressive conduct, for which the government's purpose is unrelated to the suppression of expression (a content neutral restriction), need only satisfy the less stringent *O'Brien* four factor test for evaluating restrictions on symbolic speech." 838 A.2d at 350 n. 23.

The Maine Supreme Court noted that the activity prescribed by the Maine provision, which is similar to the prohibition against personal solicitation of campaign contributions in the Minnesota Solicitation Clause, "is exactly [the] activity that potentially creates a bias, or at least the appearance of a bias, for or against a party to a proceeding." *Id.* at 351.

CONCLUSION

The Eighth Circuit failed to consider the public perception of judicial integrity when it invalidated Minnesota's Solicitation Clause. The perception of integrity is vital to ensuring public respect for the judiciary. Minnesota has narrowly tailored the Solicitation Clause to address this compelling state interest. *Amicus Curiae* The Missouri Bar respectfully urges the Court to grant Petitioners' Petition for Writ of Certiorari.

Respectfully submitted,

BLANTON, RICE, SIDWELL, NICKELL,
COZEAN & COLLINS, L.L.C.
219 South Kingshighway
Post Office Box 805
Sikeston, Missouri 63801
Phone 573-471-1000 Fax 573-471-1012
jblanton@blantonlaw.com

JOSEPH C. BLANTON, JR.
Counsel of Record
SHAUN D. HANSCHEN

Attorneys for Amicus Curiae
The Missouri Bar

No. 05-566

In The Supreme Court of the United States

MARTHA HOLTON DIMICK, CHAIRPERSON, MINNESOTA BOARD ON JUDICIAL STANDARDS, ET AL.,

Petitioners,

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REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MINNESOTA, ET AL.,

Respondents.

On Petition For Writ Of Certiorari To The United States Court Of Appeals For The Eighth Circuit

BRIEF OF *AMICI CURIAE* STATES OF NORTH DAKOTA, ARKANSAS, CALIFORNIA, COLORADO, OKLAHOMA, OREGON, SOUTH DAKOTA, WEST VIRGINIA AND WISCONSIN IN SUPPORT OF PETITIONERS

State of North Dakota
WAYNE STENEHJEM
Attorney General

DOUGLAS A. BAHR
Counsel of Record
Solicitor General

TAG ANDERSON
Asst. Attorney General

OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL
500 North 9th Street
Bismarck, ND 58501-4509
Telephone (701) 328-3640
Facsimile (701) 328-4300

Counsel for Amici Curiae

[Additional Counsel Listed On Inside Cover]

COCKLE LAW BRIEF PRINTING CO (800) 225-6964
OR CALL COLLECT (402) 342-2831

MIKE BEEBE
Attorney General
State of Arkansas
323 Center Street
Little Rock, AR 72201

BILL LOCKYER
Attorney General
State of California
1300 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

JOHN W. SUTHERS
Colorado Attorney General
1525 Sherman Street, 5th Floor
Denver, CO 80203

W.A. DREW EDMONDSON
Attorney General of Oklahoma
2300 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Suite 112
Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4894

HARDY MYERS
Attorney General
State of Oregon
1162 Court Street N.E.
Salem, OR 97301

LAWRENCE E. LONG
Attorney General
State of South Dakota
1320 East Highway 14, Suite 1
Pierre, SD 57501

DARRELL V. MCGRAW, JR.
Attorney General of West Virginia
Office of the Attorney General
State Capitol, Room 26-E
Charleston, WV 25305

PEGGY A. LAUTENSCHLAGER
Attorney General
State of Wisconsin
114 East State Capitol Building
Madison, WI 53702

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BRIEF OF *AMICI CURIAE*

The States of North Dakota et al., as *amici curiae* ("*Amici* States"), respectfully submit this brief in support of the Petition for a Writ of Certiorari. *Amici* States oppose the decision below of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, which held that the "solicitation clause" and the "partisan activities" provisions of the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct violate the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. *Amici* States urge this Court to grant Minnesota's petition in order to correct the Eighth Circuit's unprecedented decision.

INTEREST OF *AMICI CURIAE*

An independent and impartial judiciary is crucial to maintaining the integrity of governance. Only the judiciary can check executive and legislative encroachment on individual rights. As the State's judicial power uniquely dictates whether the life, liberty and property of its citizens will be preserved or lost, the need for public confidence in the judiciary cannot be overstated. *Amici* States have a compelling interest in ensuring that their judges are free from political and financial ties that threaten their citizens' rights to due process.

Amici States, like most states, subject their judges to periodic elections. *Amici* States come before this Court to represent the interests of their own citizens in ensuring the election of judges in a manner that does not destroy, in fact or appearance, the impartiality of those selected. Applying a strict scrutiny standard that simply could never be met, the Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit has created uncertainty and confusion about whether the states can take any necessary steps to preserve the independence and impartiality of judges selected through an elective process. Since the only safe harbor for states under this decision is no regulation at all, states will be forced to either ignore the threats to an independent and impartial judiciary or make themselves targets for litigation.

In a time of growing attacks on judicial independence, states will need to re-evaluate, on an ongoing basis, what measures are necessary to ensure that judges, whether appointed or elected, are capable of fulfilling that countermajoritarian role that is unique to the judiciary. It is imperative that this process move forward with a proper understanding of the legal framework. The Eighth Circuit misapplied *White*[1] and ignored this Court's earlier decisions. The result was not merely an incorrect decision, but one requiring broad and sweeping changes to the way judges are selected. The damage to the integrity of the judiciary in the states will not easily be undone by a correction at a later time. This Court should grant the Certiorari Petition and address these issues which have profound consequences to state judiciaries.

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE PETITION

The Eighth Circuit invalidated two provisions of the Minnesota Code of Judicial Conduct: (1) the "partisan activities" provisions, to the extent they bar judicial candidates from attending or speaking at political party meetings, identifying themselves as members of a political party, and seeking, accepting, or using political party endorsements; and (2) the "solicitation clause," to the extent it prohibits judicial candidates from personally soliciting contributions from large groups and from personally signing letters requesting campaign contributions. Both of these provisions further unusually important state interests.

Minnesota, like many states, provides for the election of judges on a nonpartisan basis. The partisan-activities clause extends the restrictions on political activities by judges to candidates, thereby ensuring that elections for judges remain truly nonpartisan. Of course, maintaining truly nonpartisan elections is not an end itself, but rather is a means by which Minnesota furthers critically important interests. Due process, separation of powers, and public confidence in institutional integrity are interests that are served by a nonpartisan judicial election system. In short, a

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[1] *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002).

nonpartisan judicial election process fosters an impartial and truly independent judiciary.

The personal solicitation restrictions also further litigants' rig to due process, preserve public confidence in governme and protect the integrity of the election process. Impartiality and independence are again at the heart of the restrictions.

Some states continue to elect judges through fully partisan elections and a few allow relatively unfettered solicitation of money. And it cannot yet be claimed that these states are routinely trampling litigants' rights to due process, do not enjoy some measure of separation between the judiciary and the other branches of government, or have such low public confidence in the judiciary that there is no longer respect for the rule of law.

But it is the inherent uncertainty in such matters and the states' ability to address that uncertainty that is at play in this case. The appearance of a lack of impartiality and independence is as important as its actuality. Where balancing interests constitutionally protected on both sides, states have a strong interest in not having their judgments, based upon long historical experience and practical realities, cast aside. States also have a peculiarly strong interest in defining the degree of independence the judicial branch requires to properly exercise the power of judicial review.

By invalidating the partisan activities provisions, the Eighth Circuit's decision threatens to undermine the states' time-honored efforts to protect judges from the real and perceived risks of partisan politics. By invalidating the solicitation clause, the Eighth Circuit's decision eviscerates the states' ability to address the corrosive effects of money in the unique setting of judicial campaigns.

I. The Court Of Appeals For The Eighth Circuit Has Misapplied This Court's Decision In *White* And Thereby Frustrated The States' Ability To Preserve The Independence And Impartiality Of Judges Selected Through An Elective Process.

This Court's decision in *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 536 U.S. 765, has led to considerable legal commentary

as well as some judicial consternation. *See, e.g.*, Caufield, *In The Wake Of White: How States Are Responding To* Republican Party Of Minnesota v. White *And How Judicial Elections Are Changing*, 38 Akron L. Rev. 625 (2005); *North Dakota Family Alliance, Inc. v. Bader*, 361 F.Supp.2d 1021, 1041 (D.N.D. 2005) ("To say that there is considerable uncertainty regarding the scope of the Supreme Court's decision in *White* is an understatement.") But however one reads *White*, it is clear that the Eighth Circuit has misapplied the decision.

The Eighth Circuit employed the analysis from *White* in a manner that is contrary to the opinion and results in a fundamental departure from prior precedent of this Court. For example, the Eighth Circuit's analysis cannot be reconciled with *United States Civil Service Commission v. National Association of Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. 548 (1973). Although the Eighth Circuit ignores it in its decision, it would seem that the Eighth Circuit reads *White* as suggesting *Letter Carriers* is no longer sound because the prohibitions at issue (restricting certain partisan activities of federal employees) are wholly underinclusive because employees remain free to join and actively participate in groups like the NRA, NAACP, NOW, and other political action groups.

The Eighth Circuit read *White* to be a far more sweeping opinion than it actually was. In particular, the Eighth Circuit wrongly equated the partisan-activities and solicitation clauses at issue here as equivalent to the announce clause analyzed in *White*; failed to understand the relationship between the challenged clauses and the role of the judiciary; and misread *White* as working a fundamental change in how judicial election restrictions must be analyzed. If left standing, the Eighth Circuit decision will result in fundamental changes not only in the selection process but also in the way the judicial branch relates to the political branches of government and ultimately further erode public confidence in the judiciary.

A. This Court's decision in *White* and the application of traditional strict scrutiny analysis.

The Court in *White* addressed the announce clause of Minnesota's Canons of Judicial Conduct. The prohibition was deemed a content-based restriction on judicial candidate speech – a restriction that all but prohibited speech of any meaningful content. *White*, 536 U.S. at 773. The dissenting opinions focused on the reality (as they saw it) that statements made during a campaign are different from positions taken at other times and therefore must necessarily risk being taken as "[v]ote for me, because I believe X, and I will judge cases accordingly." *White*, 536 U.S. at 800 (Stevens, J., dissenting). Thus, whether one accepted the proposition that speech in the context of a judicial election posed a unique threat to judicial independence or impartiality appeared to have as much to do with the outcome of *White* as any differing view of constitutional doctrine.[2]

Justice Scalia, writing for the majority in *White*, stated that both the Eighth Circuit panel decision and the Minnesota Respondents used the terms "independent" and "impartial" in a way that suggested they were interchangeable. Defining "impartiality" as having three possible meanings – a lack of bias for or against a party, a lack of preconception towards any particular legal view, and having general open-mindedness on legal issues – the Court set the stage for its decision.

The Court concluded that the announce clause was barely tailored at all to preserve the interest in having a judiciary unbiased against particular parties. With the Court's focus on bias for or against a specific party, in the sense that due process would strictly prohibit, the announce clause would appear quite naturally both underinclusive and overinclusive and therefore not narrowly tailored to serve that interest.

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[2] *See* W. Weiser, *Regulating Judges' Political Activity After* White, 68 Alb. L. Rev. 651 (2005).

The Court next turned to the possible interest in having judges without any preconception towards any legal proposition. The Court quickly dispensed with this interest, concluding that it was not even a desirable, let alone compelling governmental interest. "And since avoiding judicial preconceptions on legal issues is neither possible nor desirable, pretending otherwise by attempting to preserve the 'appearance' of that type of impartiality can hardly be a compelling state interest either." *White*, 536 U.S. at 778.

Finally, the Court turned to the interest in having a judiciary that is open-minded on legal issues. Although noting that it "may well be that impartiality in this sense, and the appearance of it, are desirable in the judiciary," the Court declined to address whether this interest could be sufficiently compelling to justify restrictions on judicial candidate speech. *White*, 536 U.S. at 778. The Court concluded that the announce clause was so woefully underinclusive as to belie any interest in preserving or protecting judicial open-mindedness.

Although purporting to apply this Court's "underinclusiveness" analysis from *White*, the Eighth Circuit misapplied this Court's reasoning in *White* in a way that effectively dooms any attempt by a state to balance the needs of an impartial and truly independent judiciary with an elective selection process.

B. The Eighth Circuit misapplied *White* to the partisan-activities clause.

In its decision, the Eighth Circuit reviewed the partisan-activities clause by employing the same analysis to the same stated justifications articulated in *White*. Thus, the Eighth Circuit focused on judicial bias against litigants and judicial open-mindedness on legal issues as the only possible rationales for the prohibitions at issue.[3]

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[3] In *White*, the court necessarily discussed the proffered state interest in broad terms – judicial open-mindedness – because of how broadly the announce clause operated – prohibiting "a judicial candidate

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However, in reviewing the partisan-activities clause, the Eighth Circuit started with an untenable premise that quite clearly foretold the outcome of the case. According to the Eighth Circuit, partisanship is nothing more than a shorthand announcement by association of the views a judicial candidate holds. *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 416 F.3d 738, 754 (8th Cir. 2005) (en banc). If seeking, accepting and using a partisan endorsement amounted to nothing more than publicly stating one's views on the issues of the day, then one might agree with the Eighth Circuit decision. But partisanship is not simply indirectly announcing one's views on legal issues, it is an alignment with political machinery that controls or seeks to control the other two branches of government. To the extent partisan activities announce views on legal issues at all, such activities during a campaign must also certainly announce that one is and will continue to be loyal to a political party.

Unlike announcing one's views on legal issues during a campaign, which the majority in *White* found no more uniquely destructive of impartiality than previous law review articles, judicial decisions, or other earlier statements, the same cannot be said for partisan activities prohibited by Minnesota's judicial canons. A previously politically active judicial candidate's views on legal issues may not change from the views expressed by a political party in the few months he runs for judicial office, but the candidate's "special relationship," real or perceived, with that political machinery is virtually dependent upon the campaign process itself. *McConnell v. Fed. Election Comm'n*, 540 U.S. 93, 145 (2003). As the dissent in the Eighth Circuit decision explained:

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from stating his views on any specific nonfanciful legal question within the province of the court for which he is running." *White*, 536 U.S. at 773. But to import this broadly stated interest to a far more circumscribed problem surely misses the mark, no less than reviewing a measure with "public safety" as the state interest at play, regardless of what particular aspect of public safety was being addressed.

> The threat to open-mindedness at which the partisan activities and solicitation clauses aim comes not from within the candidates, but from without and consists of the candidates placing themselves in debt to powerful and wide-reaching political organizations that can make or break them in each election. This is a fundamental distinction between the partisan activities and solicitation clauses, on the one hand, and the announce clause, which was at issue in *White*.

Republican Party of Minnesota v. White, 416 F.3d at 768 (Gibson, J., dissenting).

In striking down the partisan-activities clause, the Eighth Circuit employed a rather mechanical, and wholly inappropriate, application of *White's* underinclusiveness analysis. The Eighth Circuit first failed to specifically address the interest addressed by the partisan-activities clause, instead simply adopting the "open mindedness" inquiry articulated in *White*. But certainly the political activities provisions are not designed to address judicial open-mindedness in all of its aspects. The pledges or promises clause addresses threats to judicial open-mindedness that arise from campaign statements that promise or appear to promise how a judicial candidate will decide a case or class of cases. The solicitation clause addresses threats to judicial open-mindedness that arise from the influence of money. The partisan-activities clause, on the other hand, addresses outside pressures on an independent and impartial judiciary that can arise from the realities of partisan politics.[4]

Properly defined, the partisan-activities clause can hardly be viewed as underinclusive, as its reach is limited to the threat to open-mindedness or true judicial independence that can only arise when an individual becomes indebted to a party that can play the role of judge-maker. The evil sought

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[4] The failure to address all of the Canons together is part of the Eighth Circuit's misstep. Read in isolation from other provisions, it is not surprising that one provision may be underinclusive and fail to address the entire problem however stated.

to be addressed, indebtedness and allegiance and the appearance of that indebtedness and allegiance, primarily arises in the context of a campaign and that ever present next election cycle looming on the horizon.

White found that the announce clause was temporally underinclusive because it only applied to announcing views during the campaign. Under the announce clause, judges were permitted to announce their views whenever they wrote an opinion, and nonjudge candidates were permitted to announce their views at any time before or after the campaign. *White* therefore found that the real purpose of the announce clause was to stifle campaign speech.

In contrast, the partisan-activities clause applies to judges at all times, a fact that is not even mentioned in the Eighth Circuit opinion. In fact, the partisan-activities clause is only an aspect of a more general prohibition on political activities by judges that is found in the federal system as well as many states. The question presented is whether, in a nonpartisan election system, this restriction may be extended to nonjudge candidates as well as to judges.

The answer must be yes. First, an election in which the challenger conducts a partisan campaign will be a partisan election even if the incumbent refrains from partisan activity. Second, the partisan associations of a nonjudge candidate will conflict with her role as judge if she is elected, in the same manner that partisan associations of the incumbent judge would conflict if the latter is re-elected. Third, unlike announcing views, partisan affiliation is unnecessary to a robust election. A candidate does not need partisan ties to announce his views on disputed legal and political issues. To the extent that the Eighth Circuit is correct that announcement of partisan affiliation is merely an implied announcement of views, a candidate can easily avoid the impact of the partisan restrictions by announcing those views directly.

It is true that the partisan activities provisions do not prohibit candidates with partisan backgrounds from seeking judicial office. But that is a feature of every judicial selection system, including the federal model. The assumption is that a candidate with a partisan past can meaningfully put that

past behind him when he is sworn in as judge, and serve as judge free from partisan influence. History has shown this assumption is true, as there are a great many judges who have divorced themselves from partisan backgrounds to make enormous contributions on the bench, contributions that would be lost if their partisan backgrounds had rendered them ineligible for judicial office.[5] In a nonpartisan election system, however, the prohibition on partisanship becomes effective not when the judge is sworn in but when the lawyer becomes a candidate. Otherwise the prohibition will be ineffective.

Apart from incorrectly asserting that temporal underinclusiveness belied the stated purpose for the provision, the Eighth Circuit also went on to opine that the interest in judicial open-mindedness could not in any event ever be a sufficiently compelling interest to justify an abridgement of core First Amendment rights. The basis for this conclusion was nothing more than the continued assertion that the partisan-activities clause was underinclusive. The Eighth Circuit turned the underinclusiveness inquiry on its head.

The underinclusiveness of a measure may well be evidence that the proffered concerns may not have truly motivated the state and may cast doubt on how compelling the interest really is. But the underinclusiveness of a measure does not directly dictate that the interests are therefore automatically not compelling.

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[5] The Eighth Circuit characterized the Minnesota judiciary as "patronage-propounded selectees." *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 416 F.3d at 753 n.11. Apart from its mistaken assumptions about judicial selections in Minnesota, this statement illustrates a failure to understand the essential similarities in the role of judges regardless of the courts in which they serve. Judges in some states and in the federal system are appointed by a partisan office holder. A dismissal of the importance of judicial independence cannot be compartmentalized to the state judiciary. If judicial independence is not a sufficiently important value to justify restrictions on partisan affiliation, it becomes difficult to assert it as a value sufficient to defend against the numerous other ways in which the independence of the state and federal judiciary is under attack.

The Eighth Circuit found that the Minnesota provisions were underinclusive because judicial candidates were not prohibited from speaking at, or obtaining the endorsement of, other organizations such as the NRA, NAACP, NOW, AFL-CIO, and other politically active organizations, and therefore Minnesota had left appreciable damage to the supposed vital state interest. The Eighth Circuit's assertion is somewhat surprising. Quite to the contrary, Minnesota has not left appreciable damage to that interest (even assuming the interest is limited to judicial open-mindedness as articulated by the court). Until *White*, announcing one's views to political interest groups could run afoul of the announce clause contained in Minnesota's Code of Judicial Conduct and certainly implicitly pledging results in office to such political interests groups would run afoul of the pledges and promises clause. Most importantly, however, the Eighth Circuit's reasoning fails to recognize that the partisan-activities clause is not aimed at a candidate's announcing views by association, but rather the direct influence that is inherent in partisan activities.

In *United States Civil Service Comm'n v. National Ass'n of Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. 548 (1973), this Court expressly recognized the danger partisan activities could pose to fair and effective government. Importantly, the Court in *Letter Carriers* noted that restrictions on partisan activities were not necessarily aimed at particular views or parties or groups with such views. Rather, the restrictions were aimed at ensuring that public servants performed their jobs "without bias or favoritism for or against any political party or group or the members thereof." 413 U.S. at 565. The interest at stake was not defined in terms of having public servants that did not have *any* bias on matters that might impact their support for the laws or programs they were charged with carrying into effect.[6] Rather, the interest under review

[6] The Eighth Circuit ruminates over the fact Canon 5 does not apply to political action organizations like the NRA. But certainly a restriction on federal employees participating in such groups would not be valid under the reasoning of *United States Civil Service Comm'n v. National*

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was limited to the peculiar influence of partisan politics and the appearance of that influence. *Id.* ("[I]t is not only important that the Government and its employees in fact avoid practicing political justice, but it is also critical that they appear to the public to be avoiding it, if confidence in the system of representative Government is not to be eroded to a disastrous extent.")[7]

One might assert that, unlike the interests that others may have in enlisting public employees to join the party fight, the interest voters may have in receiving information on party endorsement distinguishes this case from *Letter Carriers*. But that argument would call into question the legitimacy of nonpartisan elections entirely. Given that a judicial candidate is free to announce his views on any platform of issues, the restrictions contained in Canon 5 do no more than prohibit the candidate from placing himself under the influence of a controlling party. The provisions are not aimed at any expression at all, but rather the reality of partisan influence and its appearance.[8] Examined in a realistic light, the extent and nature of any impact on voters is negligible. Certainly the interests of any single potential voter in receiving such limited information is no greater than a public employee's right to engage in a broad range of

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Ass'n of Letter Carriers, because the harm being addressed is more narrow and focused.

[7] "[W]idely available and publicized evidence substantiates the fear that the majority of the public believes that partisanship does influence the decisions of state courts." *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 416 F.3d 738, 774 (Gibson, J., dissenting). Recusal is not a practical means of addressing this evil as the resulting search for a neutral judge ultimately further damages the credibility and integrity of the judiciary. *See, e.g.*, Ralph Blumenthal, *Delay Case Turns Spotlight on Texas Judicial System*, N.Y. Times, November 8, 2005.

[8] And it is not just partisan influence alone that is at stake, it is also those that work through a party to gain influence. For "whether they like it or not, [parties] act as agents for spending on behalf of those who seek to produce obligated officeholders." *Federal Election Comm'n v. Colorado Republican Federal Campaign Comm.*, 533 U.S. 431, 452 (2001).

partisan activities. *United States Civil Service Commission v. National Association of Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. 548.

Because of the peculiar influence, or appearance of influence partisan politics brings to bear on office-holders, the line drawn by Minnesota hardly results in arbitrary underinclusiveness, but rather is a measured response to address a most acute threat to judicial independence, integrity, and impartiality.[9] It is a complete misreading of this Court's discussion on underinclusiveness in *White*, as well as completely without logic, to conclude that Minnesota's interest in judicial independence, integrity and impartiality is stripped of significance simply because Canon 5 alone does not go far enough to preserve these interests in all conceivable respects.

C. The Eighth Circuit misapplied *White* to the solicitation clause.

The Eighth Circuit addressed the solicitation clause with the same broad interests outlined in *White*. Thus, the Eighth Circuit posed the question as whether the solicitation clause served the interest of preventing bias against a party and a general interest in judicial open-mindedness on legal issues. The Eighth Circuit again failed to appreciate the precise issue that the provisions seeks to address – the influence of money and its appearance.

At the outset, the Eighth Circuit addressed the issue without any consideration of its decision on the partisan-activities clause and what impact this would have on its consideration of the solicitation provisions. The Eighth Circuit stressed that under Canon 5, the contributions go to a committee and the committee was prohibited from disclosing who contributed and those who rebuffed solicitation. But

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[9] And apart from the inherent and logical differences between political parties and special interests groups, the Eighth Circuit had scant evidence to support its implicit assertion that special interest groups have an ability to produce obligated office holders comparable to political parties.

with a candidate fully able to seek, obtain and use party endorsements, it will come as no surprise to anyone from where some, if not the lion's share, of the monies derive. It is also somewhat naive to think that a candidate does not expect that much of the funds he raises are from the very people to whom he makes a request. In addressing large groups for donations, it seems a simple proposition – candidates do not ask people that are disinclined to give.[10]

In addition, with the ability to announce one's views on disputed legal issues that may come before the very court the candidate seeks, the specter of campaign pandering arises. Of course, other elected office holders quite often ask for contributions from groups while pandering to the views espoused by the group. But the reality is that with judicial elections, the primary contributors are often the very lawyers and law firms that appear before the court. Announcing one's views on the constitutionality of tort reform measures under state law may do little to impact the integrity, impartiality and independence of the candidate in isolation, but the same comments to members of the plaintiffs' bar while asking for a campaign contribution most certainly erodes public confidence in judicial integrity, impartiality, and independence.

The corrosive effects of asking for campaign contributions in this setting is certainly no less than when a candidate receives a "large" campaign contribution. Quite apart from any improper motivations on the part of the judicial candidate, "the appearance of improper influence 'is also critical . . . if confidence in the [judiciary] is not to be eroded to a disastrous extent.'" *Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1, 27

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[10] And aside from the real appearance of impropriety, "any candidate can flank the campaign committee's confidentiality obligation simply by looking up public records showing who contributed to whom." *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 416 F.3d 738, 786 (Gibson, J., dissenting). And the only purpose served by an individually signed letter is to impress upon the recipient the idea that the candidate himself had personally made the request.

(1976) (quoting *United States Civil Service Comm'n v. National Ass'n of Letter Carriers*, 413 U.S. at 565).

II. Strict In Theory Or Fatal In Fact – The Decision Below Ignores That States Must Be Accorded Some Deference In Strict Scrutiny Cases When Balancing Interests Of Constitutional Magnitude.

In its decision, the Eighth Circuit employed a brand of strict scrutiny that simply could never be met. First, the Eighth Circuit concluded that underinclusiveness of any appreciable degree negated the state's interest as compelling. Next, the Eighth Circuit required any provision at issue to be narrowly tailored to the point of unattainable precision.

However, this Court has repeatedly rejected the notion of a strict scrutiny standard that is strict in theory but always fatal in fact. *See, e.g., Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Pena*, 515 U.S. 200, 237 (1995). The Court simply does not impose "judicial formulas so rigid that they become a straitjacket that disables government from responding to serious problems." *Denver Area Educ. Telecomm. Consortium, Inc. v. FCC*, 518 U.S. 727, 741 (1996).

Reasoned strict scrutiny analysis is especially important where "a law significantly implicates competing constitutionally protected interests in complex ways." *Nixon v. Shrink Mo. Gov't PAC*, 528 U.S. 377, 402 (2000) (Breyer, J., concurring). There must be room for line drawing and decisions to tackle "the problem which seems most acute to the legislative mind." *McConnell v. Fed. Election Comm'n*, 540 U.S. at 208.

Some deference in the assessment of the harm and where it is most acute is essential. Courts have no inherent better handle on the extent to which litigants' perceptions of unfairness or corruption develop from partisan activities or direct solicitation for money than legislative bodies. But certainly there is nothing novel or implausible in the judgment that such practices do pose a serious threat to public confidence in the judiciary. *Nixon v. Shrink Mo. Gov't PAC*, 528 U.S. 377, 402. And this Court's review is no less exacting

by simply taking into account these judgments that motivated the provisions at issue. *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306, 308 (2003).

One of the primary justifications for the restrictions at issue is the state's interest and indeed obligation in guaranteeing due process for its citizens and the citizens of sister states that are subject to the judicial power of that state. Of course, due process requires a judge to be impartial, in the sense that he may not have a personal stake in the outcome. But the concept of due process must also resolve, on principal, who must bear the risk of unavoidable uncertainty. *See generally Peters v. Kiff*, 407 U.S. 493 (1972). "As a practical matter, we cannot know for sure whether an elected judge's decisions are based on his interpretation of the law or political expediency." *White*, 536 U.S. at 800 (Stevens, J., dissenting). States must have some latitude in addressing uncertainty, where the uncertainty implicates the very fairness of judicial proceedings. The Eighth Circuit's opinion does not explain why the constitutional scale requires a litigant to bear the risk of uncertainty, or more importantly why the state's judgment that partisan activities and direct solicitations create an intolerable level of uncertainty, is not entitled to some deference, particularly where the state is quite clearly balancing competing constitutional values.

Justice O'Connor in her concurring opinion in *White* stressed that the very practice of electing judges undermines to some extent the state's interest in actual and perceived impartiality. If elections themselves undermine this interest, it is certainly not difficult to see how partisan elections, with all of the partisan activities that go along with such elections, undermines this interest even more directly and substantially. If the practice of electing judges is not violative of due process (and it is not) then the states remain free to walk this tightrope. And in doing so, some deference must be accorded to these judgments.

The unstated proposition underlying the Eighth Circuit decision, in so far as its application of the strict scrutiny test could simply never be met, is that a state is prohibited from taking prophylactic measures designed to ensure that the

state is meeting its obligations of due process. Applying a strict scrutiny test that is more strict in theory but fatal in fact, the only permissible measures apparently would be those that are strictly required by due process. But that has never been the state of the law on First Amendment jurisprudence. *See, e.g.*, *Cox v. Louisiana*, 379 U.S. 559 (1965).

III. A State's Ability To Ensure An Independent Judiciary Is Necessary To Maintain Any True Separation Of Powers, An Independent And Compelling Governmental Interest Ignored By The Eighth Circuit.

White criticized the failure to clearly define the state interests served by the announce clause. But when the partisan-activities clause came before the Minnesota Supreme Court, the court specifically defined the interests served by the clause. The court stated that the clause not only served a state interest in judicial impartiality but also a distinct interest in judicial independence recognized in *Peterson v. Stafford*, 490 N.W.2d 418 (Minn. 1992) and related to the provision for separation of powers in the Minnesota Constitution:

> [T]he separation of powers inherent in the creation of three distinct branches of government, one of which is the judicial branch, in article III, section 1 of the Minnesota Constitution provides the constitutional underpinning for the independence of the Minnesota judiciary. As the executive and legislative branches are inextricably intertwined with partisan politics, maintenance of an independent judicial branch is reliant on the freedom of its officials from the control of partisan politics.

In re Amendment of the Code of Judicial Conduct, No. C4-85-697, slip op. at 1 (Minn. Sept. 14, 2004). The Eighth Circuit showed little understanding of this state interest. *See Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 416 F.3d at 752 n.7.

"Elected officials in some sense serve two masters: the constituents who elected them and the political sponsors who support them." *Vieth v. Jubelirer*, 541 U.S. 267, 332 (2004) (Stevens, J., dissenting). But "the judge represents the Law – which often requires him to rule against the People." *Chisom v. Roemer*, 501 U.S. 380, 411 (1991) (Scalia, J., dissenting.) For it is the courts' duty to "make the final decision and whose impartiality serves as the ultimate guarantee of a fair and meaningful proceeding in our constitutional regime." *Marshall v. Jerrico, Inc.*, 446 U.S. 238, 250 (1980). In fact, the very "legitimacy of the Judicial Branch ultimately depends on its reputation for impartiality and nonpartisanship." *Mistretta v. United States*, 488 U.S. 361, 407 (1989). "Judicial integrity is, in consequence, a state interest of the highest order." *White*, 536 U.S. at 793 (Kennedy, J., concurring).

Impartiality, integrity and independence are terms that imply related concepts. But in the context of discerning whether there is a compelling state interest that justifies some limited curtailment of partisan and political activities in elections for judicial office, they must be looked at separately.[11] Judicial independence, in this sense, means

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[11] "In *White*, remember, the Court did not consider Minnesota's interest in preserving judicial independence because the parties had used the terms "independence" and "impartiality" to mean the same thing. They do not. Whereas the interest in impartiality is rooted in the due process rights of litigants, the interest in judicial independence is rooted in the principle of separation of powers. Although judicial independence may promote impartiality, that is not its only function. Independence also is the foundation of the power of judicial review, which enables the judiciary effectively to check the political branches through the process of judicial review. The independence required to guarantee due process to litigants is not coextensive with that required to pass on the constitutionality of political acts. In addition, independence enables the judiciary to promote the rule of law instead of rule by men and women. While this form of independence is essential to due process in that it seeks to ensure that the law will be applied in an evenhanded manner, it also serves a broader goal of upholding long-term commitments embodied in the law, a goal not necessarily related to a judge's impartiality toward the litigants before her." W. Weiser, *Regulating Judges' Political Activity After* White, 68 Alb. L. Rev. 651, 666-667 (2005) (footnotes omitted).

that separation from the responsive branches of government that is necessary to properly carry out the power of judicial review.

In *White*, Justice Scalia, writing for the majority, noted that the "role that elected officials play in our society makes it all the more imperative that they be allowed freely to express themselves on matters of current public importance." *White*, 536 U.S. at 781-782 (quoting *Wood v. Georgia*, 370 U.S. 375, 395 (1962)). But here, the role of the position is defined by the sovereign as being a check on the political branches – a countermajoritarian force that simply cannot co-exist peacefully with partisanship. In fact, contrary to the dicta in *White*, the move towards judicial elections was not motivated by an attempt to diminish the independence of the judiciary but rather just the opposite – an attempt to free the judiciary from the entanglements of partisanship. R. Schotland, *To The Endangered Species List, Add: Nonpartisan Judicial Elections*, 39 Willamette L. Rev. 1397, 1400 (2003); W. Weiser, *Regulating Judges' Political Activity After* White, 68 Alb. L. Rev. 651 (2005).

As the Eighth Circuit remarked, party affiliation plays a role in judicial selection even in an appointive process. *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 416 F.3d at 760 n.11. And it of course would be naive to think that at least some public perception of party loyalty remains, even where the candidate is appointed for life. But a check on this appointment power by a partisan office holder is exactly the purpose Minnesota has strived for in having judicial elections.

The structure and purpose of an election is established by the sovereign. Under the so-called Missouri plan, for example, the issue to be decided is solely one of retention. Is a state's interest in keeping the office holder from engaging in partisan activities under this framework any different? Attempts at distinguishing the office holder's role as judge from candidate would clearly be untenable.

Judges are restricted in many ways while they are state actors and in ways that are more burdensome than with other office holders. *See Clements v. Fashing*, 457 U.S. 957 (1982). This is not mere balancing, *Connick v. Myers*,

461 U.S. 138 (1983), it the very definition of the position and goes to the very heart of how a sovereign has organized its government.

The Eighth Circuit failed to appreciate that partisan prohibitions apply to judges as well as non-judge candidates. In doing so, the Eighth Circuit made a crucial error; it failed to review the campaign in the context of the judicial role. The role of the judiciary as dictated by the citizens of Minnesota is one of substantial independence from the political branches of government. Under the guise of protecting Minnesota citizens' right to robust elections, the Eighth Circuit has shown a profound disrespect for the ability of a state to ensure that its citizens will have access to independent and impartial courts.[12] Through its decision, the Eighth Circuit has eviscerated the ability of Minnesota and other states to structure their government in a manner that they see fit.

CONCLUSION

At a critical time for the courts, the Eighth Circuit decision has created enormous uncertainty and confusion about the extent to which states may protect their courts from the influences of politics and money. The stakes are too high to permit delay in resolving these questions. As Justice O'Connor remarked: "Judicial independence doesn't happen all by itself, it's tremendously hard to create, and easier than most people imagine to destroy." O'Connor, remarks at University of Florida Levin College of Law (September 9, 2005) (transcript available at http://www.law.ufl.edu/dedication/speechtext.shtml). This Court's immediate review is needed. The petition for writ of certiorari should be granted.

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[12] Illustrating its misunderstanding of State sovereignty, separation of powers, and Minnesota law, the Eighth Circuit questioned the Minnesota Supreme Court's authority to adopt the Code of Judicial Conduct. *Republican Party of Minnesota v. White*, 416 F.3d at 753 n.17.

Respectfully submitted,

State of North Dakota
WAYNE STENEHJEM
Attorney General

DOUGLAS A. BAHR
Counsel of Record
Solicitor General

TAG ANDERSON
Asst. Attorney General

OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL
500 North 9th Street
Bismarck, ND 58501-4509
Telephone (701) 328-3640
Facsimile (701) 328-4300

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